

***THE GREAT
'I AM'!***

**The Distinctive Titles of Jesus As
Revealed In The**

"Gospel of John"

By: Ron Christian

JESUS - "THE GREAT 'I AM'!"

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT: 'I AM THE WORD!'

Scripture: “¹*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ²*He was with God in the beginning.* ³*Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*” (John 1: 1-3)

Text: *For in Christ there is all of God in a human body!* (Colossians 2: 9; Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION

It was John's goal to find some term to explain the person of Jesus that both the Jews and Greeks could understand. The term that meant much to both Jews and Greeks was the Greek term LOGOS, which is translated as WORD in our Bibles.

PREPOSITION

First, let us see what the Greeks and Jews understood when they heard the term LOGOS. Next let us try to understand the character of the Logos. Lastly, let us think about the creative activity of the Logos.

- I. **CONCEPT OF LOGOS - (WORD)**
 - A. **TO THE JEWS.**
 - B. **TO THE GREEKS.**

- II. **CHARACTER OF LOGOS (WORD)**
 - A. ***"IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD"*! (JOHN 1:1)**
 - B. ***"THE WORD WAS WITH GOD"*! (JOHN 1:1)**
 - C. ***"THE WORD WAS GOD"*! (JOHN 1:1)**

- III. **CREATIVITY OF LOGOS (WORD)**
 - A. **JESUS (WORD) CREATED THE WORLD OUT OF NOTHING.**
 - B. **THIS WORD IS GOD'S WORLD, AND IS THEREFORE BEAUTIFUL AND WONDERFUL TO LIVE IN.**

CONCLUSION

John found an appealing term that meant something special to both the Jews and Greeks, in explaining who Jesus was. That term is LOGOS and meant that Jesus was the dynamic, creative, eternal, and illuminating power and Mind of God. We also learn from John that Jesus was unique, for Jesus alone was God and also Man.

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CHAPTER 1

"I AM THE WORD!"

INTRODUCTION

Because the Greeks were unfamiliar with Jewish terms, categories, and ways of thinking, it was necessary that John to restate the Christian faith in terms that the Greek mind could understand. The Greeks, for instance, were unfamiliar with Jewish history, and genealogies, and had no background for understanding the Jewish concept of the Messiah. It was necessary, therefore, that an account of Jesus' life and teachings be written, that would not only appeal to the Jewish mind, but that would also be compatible to the categories of Greek thought.

It was John's goal to find some term to explain the person of Jesus, which both the Jews and Greeks could understand. The term that meant much to both Jews and Greeks was the Greek term LOGOS, which is translated as WORD in our Bibles.

PROPOSITION:

It is a worthy attempt for one to try to understand what John meant when he used the term WORD or LOGOS to describe Jesus. Let us approach this study from three different angles. First let us see what the Greeks and Jews understood when they heard the term Logos; next, let us try to understand the character of the Logos; and finally let us think about the creative activity of the Logos.

I. CONCEPT OF LOGOS (WORD)

A. TO THE JEWS.

- (1) *When John said, "In the beginning was the word, and the word as with God, and the word was God," this meant something special to a Jew. When the WORD was used it always had dynamic, acting, creating qualities associated with it. When a word was spoken, something powerful resulted. A word was impregnated with power and dynamic.*

Look at specific instances. In the Creation story, when God spoke, something creative resulted. (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9). The Psalmist wrote:

"⁶ By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth..." (Psalms 33:6); ¹⁵ He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. (Psalms 147:15, NIV). Isaiah wrote about God's Word: ¹¹ "...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11, NIV).

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Dynamic, acting, creative qualities are associated with the Word, as it is spoken in the Old Testament.

When John spoke of Jesus as the Word, it is as if He was saying to His Jewish readers, *"The acting, dynamic, creating qualities that you have always associated with a spoken word, now exist in the Person of Jesus – the Logos, the Living Word of God."*

The term LOGOS not only meant WORD, but it also meant REASON which meant the same as WISDOM as it is used in the Old Testament. The word WISDOM is personified in the Old Testament. Personification means that personal qualities are given to an inanimate thing. When we speak of 'Old Man River' we are using personification.

- (2) The term 'Wisdom' is personified in the Old Testament
Proverbs (8:22- 30, NIV).

²² "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, ^[a], ^[h] his deeds of old; ²³ I was appointed ^[c] from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. ²⁴ When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; ²⁵ before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, ²⁶ before he made the earth or its field or any of the dust of the world. ²⁷ I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. ³⁰ Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence,"

The very qualities that the writer of Proverbs gave to WISDOM are the same qualities that John gave to Jesus as the Logos. Just as Wisdom is said to be eternal, creative, and illuminating so Jesus, who is the living WISDOM of God." Speaking of Jesus as the WORD immediately meant something to the Jews. `

Let us now see what the term LOGOS meant to the Greeks, who composed the great majority of Christians to whom John needed to restate the Christians faith in order to meet the needs of their categories of thought.

B. TO THE GREEKS

The term LOGOS also meant something very significant to the Greeks. For many centuries before John, the Greeks had been great thinkers and careful observers of the Universe. They observed the unfailing courses of the stars, the ebb and flow of the tides, the unalterable order of day and night, and the

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predictable seasons of each year.

For centuries the Greeks were fascinated by the order of the universe and nature. The Greeks believed that all things were controlled by the LOGOS, or the Reason of God. The Greeks further believed that it was the LOGOS that gave man the ability to reason, the power to think and the power to know. They believed that the LOGOS was the intermediary between the world and God and that the LOGOS or MIND of God is stamped upon the entire universe, including the world of nature, the world of events, and the mind of man. The Logos of God was what gave reason and order to all things.

When John said that Jesus was the LOGOS of God, this meant something very significant to the Greeks. As Barclay well describes, it is as if John came to the Greeks and said, "For centuries you have been thinking and writing and dreaming about the LOGOS, the power which made the world, the power which keeps the order of the world, the power by which men think and reason and know, the power by which men come into contact with God. Jesus is that LOGOS come down to earth."

When John referred to Jesus as the LOGOS, he was using a familiar term that meant something significant to both Greeks and Jews. To the Greeks and Jews, John presented Jesus as the creating, sustaining, illuminating Mind of God who had become a person.

II. CHARACTER OF LOGOS (WORD)

A. *"IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD"!* (John 1:1)

Jesus existed before the created order of the Universe. Before time existed, Jesus was with God in eternity. Jesus is not confined to time, space, or matter, but was the agent of God's creation of these elements.

The first essential truth about Jesus is that He existed from all eternity.

²*Before the mountains were born you brought forth the earth and the world everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalms 90:2)*

B. *"THE WORD WAS WITH GOD"!* (John 1:1)

John secondly tells us that Jesus, the Word, was always with God. Jesus always experienced the most intimate fellowship with God. No secrets existed between God and Jesus. No other is able to tell us as much about God as Jesus is. If we want to know about God, we must listen to what Jesus has to say about God. Jesus is our primary source for knowledge about the eternal God of the Universe. Jesus' knowledge of God supersedes all of the

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accumulated philosophies of the ancient or modern world, and is greater than the greatest insights of the prophets. Jesus came from God, and knows God personally. In Him is the culmination of all revelation.

C. "THE WORD WAS GOD"! (John 1:1)

John thirdly says that the Word was God. John, however, did not mean that Jesus was identical with God. What did he mean? When the Greeks used a noun, they almost always used the definite article with the noun. Instead of saying 'God' they would usually say 'the God'. When John wrote "the Word was God," he does not have an article in front of the word 'God'. When there is no definite article with the noun, the noun becomes more like an adjective, describing the character or the quality of the person. Therefore, when John said, "*The Word was God*", he meant that Jesus possessed the same divine qualities and same character that God Himself possessed. Jesus is identical to God in nature, character, and qualities, but not identical to God in person.

Therefore, although Jesus is a separate person, He is equal to God the Father in essence and being and divine qualities. We actually see what God is like when we look at Jesus, for Jesus was also divine.

III. CREATIVITY OF LOGOS (WORD)

John wrote concerning the Word, "*He was the agent through whom all things were made; and there is not a single thing which exists in this world which came into being without him.*" (John 1:3, Barclay Translation)

In the day in which John wrote, there was a group of heretics (Gnostics) who had a very strange idea of how the world was created. It was their belief that God was a pure spirit and that the raw matter was flawed and imperfect, and possessed the germs of evil and corruption in it. Because God was a pure spirit, it was impossible for Him to touch this evil and corrupt matter. Therefore, the Gnostics believed that this God who was pure spirit, put out from Himself a series of emanations, or what we might think of as energy waves. The further these emanations got from God, the more unlike God they became. Finally one emanation got so distant from God that it was ignorant of God and even hostile to God. It was this hostile emanation which created the world, because it was so far from God that it could touch the evil and flawed material. The real God who was pure spirit was therefore completely divorced from and opposed to the creator God.

John greatly opposed this heresy of philosophical nonsense, and firmly declared that Jesus, who was the Word of God, was the agent of God's creation. All things were made through Jesus.

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When John said *"there is not a single thing which exists in this world which came into being without Him,"* he teaches two important truths regarding the creation of the world.

A. JOHN TAUGHT THAT JESUS, THE WORD OF GOD, CREATED THE WORLD OUT OF NOTHING.

Jesus was the pre-existent Agent of God who flung the moon, sun, and stars into their regular orbits. The Son of the triune God brooded over the formless void and darkness of the earth, and brought form and life. At the word of His voice, light expelled the darkness, the firmament and seas formed, the earth became embedded with vegetable life, the water and sky and earth became the home of the fish and fowl and beast. As the crown of His creation, He made man, in whom He stamped His own image.

B. THIS WORD IS GOD'S WORLD, AND IS THEREFORE BEAUTIFUL AND WONDERFUL TO LIVE IN.

All of nature sings its hymn of praise to the Creator. The majestic mountain and the intricate daffodil, the peaceful lake and the tempestuous sea, the ancient redwood and the young spruce, the flying squirrel and the creeping turtle, the weaving spider and roaring tiger, the gentle snowflake and the cracking thunder, the dazzling sunlight and the dismal mist are all manifestations of their Creator's power, and beauty.

A little girl, who had lived all her life in a large city, was taken for a day in the country. When she saw the beautiful bluebells in the woods, she asked, "Do you think God would mind if I plucked some of His flowers?" She looked at the world in a sacred way.

CONCLUSION

John found an appealing term that meant something special to both the Jews and Greeks, in explaining who Jesus was. That term is LOGOS and meant that Jesus was the dynamic, creative, eternal, and illuminating power and Mind of God, who always enjoyed perfect fellowship with God and who was the same divine character and essence as God. We also learn from John that Jesus was unique for Jesus alone was God and also Man.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 1

1. **What did the term 'LOGOS' mean to both the Jews and the Greeks, and how did the term help communicate the identity of Jesus to them?**

2. **Tell with what degree of conviction you agree or disagree with the following statement regarding Jesus:**
 - ___ a. **Jesus existed before the created order of the universe.**
 - ___ b. **Before time existed, Jesus was with God in eternity.**
 - ___ c. **Jesus is not confined to time, space or matter, but was the agent of God's creation of these elements.**
 - ___ d. **Jesus always experienced the most intimate fellowship with God.**
 - ___ e. **No other is able to tell us as much about God as Jesus is.**
 - ___ f. **If we want to know about God, we must listen to what Jesus has to say about God.**
 - ___ g. **Jesus possessed the same divine qualities and same character that God Himself possessed.**
 - ___ h. **Jesus is identical to God in nature, character, and qualities, but not identical to God in person.**

3. **What was the belief of the heretical group called the 'Gnostics', and how did the teachings of Christianity refute their teachings?**

4. **According to John 1:3, who was the 'Agent' in the creation of the world?**

5. **Scripturally speaking, what should be the attitude of Christians regarding the physical world?**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT: "I AM THE INNER LIGHT IN EVERY PERSON"!

SCRIPTURE: *"In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood^[d] it. ⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.^[b] ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - ¹³children born not of natural descent,^[d] nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1: 4-13)*

INTRODUCTION

John teaches that God wishes for all mankind to be saved. God has been gradually revealing Himself to mankind throughout history. He revealed Himself most perfectly in the incarnate life of His Son, Jesus Christ.

PREPOSITION

Jesus, the Light of God, is (a) The Revealing Light, (b) The Inextinguishable Light, (c) The Universal Light.

- I. JESUS, THE LIGHT, REVEALS THINGS AS THEY ARE.
- II. THE LIGHT OF GOD CAN NEVER BE EXTINGUISHED, OR PUT OUT.
- III. THE LIGHT SHINES UPON ALL MEN. (vs. 9)
 - A. TRUE LIGHT
 - B. PROGRESSIVE LIGHT
 - C. UNIVERSAL LIGHT
 - D. REJECTED LIGHT

CONCLUSION

If you accept God's Light in Christ as self-surrender, then you will enjoy God's light as self-fulfillment. Jesus' light is either the means of your life or of your death, depending upon whether you accept that light or reject that light! Submit to that Light today!

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CHAPTER 2

"I AM THE INNER LIGHT IN EVERY PERSON!"

INTRODUCTION

Jesus, the Light of God! There are certain qualities of light that John focuses on the person of Jesus. Light shines through - i.e., penetrates – the darkness. In other words, the light reveals things as they are verse 5. Second, the light cannot be put out or extinguished by the darkness verse 5. Third, the light shines upon all men, verse 9.

John teaches that God wishes for all mankind to be saved. God has been gradually revealing Himself to mankind throughout history. He revealed Himself most perfectly in the incarnate life of His Son, Jesus Christ. The light of God, as seen in the person of Jesus, reveals things as they really are and this light, in many forms and degrees, has been revealed to all men in all ages. The way each responds to the Light of God revealed to him determines his own personal eternal destiny.

PREPOSITION

Jesus, the Light of God, is (a) The Revealing Light, (b) The Inextinguishable Light, (c) The Universal Light.

I. JESUS, THE LIGHT, REVEALS THINGS AS THEY ARE.

There is nothing to hide from God. *"There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed: and hid, that shall not be known."* (Matthew 10:28) There is an All-Knowing God who can read every thought and secret intent of man. *"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."* (Hebrews 4: 13) Barclay well describes what the light of Jesus does. *"It strips away the disguises and the concealments; it shows things in all their nakedness; it shows them in their true character and their true values...The externals, the disguises, the outer wrappings and trappings are stripped away; and everything stands revealed in the naked and awful loneliness of what it essentially is."* (John; pg. 25)

"On a sunny day in September, 1972, a stern-faced, plainly dressed man could be seen standing still on a street corner in the busy Chicago Loop. As pedestrians hurried by on their way to lunch or business, he would solemnly lift his right arm and pointing to the person nearest him, intone loudly the singly word "GUILTY!" Then, without any change of expression, he would resume his still stance for a few moments before repeating the gesture. Then, again, the inexorable raising of his arm, the pointing, and the solemn pronouncing of the one word 'GUILTY!'

"The effect of this strange pantomime on the passing strangers was extra-ordinary, almost eerie. They would stare at him, hesitate, look away, look at each other, and

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then at him again; then hurriedly continue on their ways.

“One man, turning to another who was my informant, exclaimed: ‘But how did he know?’

“No doubt many others had similar thoughts. How did he know, indeed?

“Guilty! Everyone guilty? Guilty of what? Guilty of over parking? Guilty of lying? Guilty of arrogance and hubris toward the one God? Guilty of ‘borrowing’, not to say embezzling? Guilty of unfaithfulness to a faithful wife? Guilty only of evil thoughts – or evil plans?

“Guilty before whom? Is a police officer following? Did anyone see? Will they be likely to notice it? Does he know about it? But that isn’t technically illegal, is it?

“I can make it up. I will give it back. I’ll apologize. I wasn’t myself when I did that. No one knows about it. But I’m going to quit. It’s a dangerous habit. I wouldn’t want the children to see me. How can I ever straighten it out? What’s done can’t be undone.” (Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became Of Sin*; pgs. 1, 2)

When the light of God struck Saul of Tarsus to his feet, Saul saw himself as God saw him, in all of his sin and self-righteousness. God unmasked Saul and showed him his true condition. When God confronted Saul, Saul cried out, ‘What shall I do?’ When God gets us on our knees and we feel our helpless condition, God can then help us. God saved Saul and he could later say, “*I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*” (Acts 26:19)

The light of God comes to all men, revealing things as they really are. There will always be one of two general responses to the light – either acceptance or rejection. Acceptance of the light leads to repentance and a change of life. Rejection of the light leads to hardness, bitterness, and further darkness. History, both from New Testament times, and since that time, is full of illustrations of some who rejected and some who accepted. Man must inevitably respond either positively or negatively when Jesus, the Light of God, reveals things as they are.

II. THE LIGHT OF GOD CAN NEVER BE EXTINGUISHED, OR PUT OUT.

The message of the Gospel may be either accepted or rejected, but it can never be eliminated. It is like a fire or flame that can never be extinguished or quenched. Throughout the centuries, men have tried to destroy the light of the Gospel, but the Gospel continues to sound forth its appeal to all men.

Why has the light of the Gospel not been put out throughout history? How can we be assured that the light of the Gospel will never be put out, regardless of the thickness of the darkness of evil and sin? Because the True Light of God – Jesus Christ – was not put out when Jesus was manifested in human flesh! If God’s Light,

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manifested in Christ, could not be put out by Satan, then it stands to reason that God is able to keep alight all reflections of that perfect Light as seen in the lives and movements of true Christians throughout history.

Notes Westcott, "The existence of the darkness is affirmed and at the same time, the unbroken energy of the light. But the victory of the light is set forth as the result of a past struggle; and the abrupt alteration of tense brings into prominence the change which has passed over the world. It could not but happen that the darkness when it came should seek to cover all; and in this attempt it failed; the light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness overcame it not." (pg. 5)

Earth's darkest day and Satan's day of apparent victory was the day of Jesus' crucifixion. The light of God's truth seemed to be extinguished when Jesus breathed His last breath. Physical darkness surrounding the cross symbolized moral and spiritual darkness, on that dreadful day when Jesus died. Satan was pitting all his strength against the Son of God, and moral darkness and defeat seemed to hold its way over light and life.

But the darkness of hell was not able to put out the light of heaven, even though, from all outward appearances, it seemed that evil was triumphant.

But even though the light of God may seem to have been put out, remember that Dark Friday was turned into Good Friday because of Bright Easter Sunday Morning! The darkness of sin and evil was overcome when Jesus arose from the dead! The darkness of sin and evil was overcoming the light of God's truth, but even though things are dark and dreadful for the first day and the second day, the light of God's power and truth is always triumphantly manifested on the third day – the day of Resurrection! Even though there is a continuing battle between light and darkness, it is important to remember that the Resurrection of Jesus guarantees the ultimate victory of light over darkness. If the darkness of sin was unable to put out the light of God's truth at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, it is certain that the darkness of sin cannot put out the light of God and truth during less fierce moral battles throughout history. If the chief battle has been won, all other battles will be won!

We cannot deny that light and darkness coexist in our world, side by side, and that there has been and continues to be a long and fierce battle between good and evil. The wrong does seem oft so strong! We cannot deny the reality of sin and corruption. "Man, made originally in the image of God, is a fallen creature; and, though the image remains, it is impaired. Moreover, the world (10), into which man comes at birth, the ordered universe, once seen by its Creator to be 'very good', is now disordered by sin and, in Paul's words, 'it groans and travails in pain'. For, however true it may be, that 'earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God', it is also true that 'nature is red in tooth and claw'; and the human hand, often outstretched to comfort to heal, is also raised to injure and destroy." (Tasker; pgs. 42, 43)

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However, while not denying that sin abounds, we affirm that grace super abounds! We can be assured (based on the victory of the Resurrection) that light cannot be overcome by the darkness of sin. In life it does seem that evil triumphs – but evil cannot triumph permanently or ultimately! Evil may seem to have the upper hand on the first and second day (as in the case of the first and second day following the crucifixion of Jesus), but evil cannot conquer on the third day! The third day is the day when evil is overcome, because the third day is the day of resurrection – the day of victory! In life's struggle against evil, the third day is the day of light's victory over darkness – the day of victory which is guaranteed to the faithful followers of Christ.

There will come a day when finally darkness will be totally vanquished in our world and the light of God will shine, unchallenged and eternal! The kingdom of light which has come to the world in the person of Jesus will be manifested in fullest splendor! Darkness will be forever vanquished! There will be eternal day. All of life and nature will be redeemed and all evil will be destroyed. Light will reign forever!

III. THE LIGHT SHINES UPON ALL MEN. (vs. 9)

A. TRUE LIGHT

John 1:9 declares, *"The true light that gives light to every man has come into the world."*

Jesus is the true or complete light in contrast to other lesser and incomplete lights previously given to mankind before Jesus' coming. These other lights were imperfect, incomplete, and transitory. Jesus is the true light because He is God's perfect, complete, and eternal light. He is like the noonday sun in contrast to the reflected light of the midnight moon.

Reflected lights from God were shone upon the earth to mankind before the coming of Jesus. These reflected lights revealed the reality of God imperfectly. The reflected lights cast shadows upon the nature and person of God; even though it is true they did partially and imperfectly reflect something of the truth of God's nature.

What were some of these imperfect and partial 'lights'? The light of nature was one of those imperfect lights. Psalms 19: 1 tells us that *"the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."* Much can be learned about the character of God through nature, but God's revelation through nature is incomplete and imperfect, compared to His revelation of Himself through His Son. We can see the power of God in the thunder and lightning and earthquakes and tornadoes. We can see the order of God in the predictable seasons of each year, in the ebb and flow of the tides, in the

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unfailing courses of the stars. But, seeing God through nature alone gives one a picture of God as a Being who is orderly and powerful, but one who may not be loving or personal.

The light of God was imperfectly and partially reflected among men in God's providential activities in historical events. Indeed, the God of Israel is seen as the 'God Who Acts'. The greatest event in history, as far as the Israelites were concerned, was God's miraculous deliverance of the enslaved Israelites from Egyptian bondage, climaxed with God's miraculous parting of the Red Sea! But the light of God revealed to mankind through historical events is still partial and incomplete and imperfect – like reflection of light from the moon rather than from the sun. Why? Because historical events can sometimes be misinterpreted and understood differently from what God intended them to be interpreted. The Jews themselves, as a nation, fell into this trap! Seeing God miraculously deliver them from Egyptian bondage with the result of God drowning the pursuing Egyptian soldiers in the Red Sea, the Israelites naturally concluded that God hated the Egyptians (and indeed, hated all other nations apart from the Jewish people). National pride became Jewish exclusivism. The Jews felt that all other races of people were inferior and even despicable! They concluded, from observation of God's miraculous intervention in history, that God loved the Jews and hated everyone else, that God was obligated to protect Israel and to fight Israel's battles, regardless of Israel's moral condition! The prophets were raised up to remind Israel, that, in spite of God's wonderful promises of deliverance which were given in the Mosaic Law and in spite of God's wonderful providential guidance of Israel throughout history, God was not unconditionally committed to helping Israel regardless of Israel's obedience or disobedience to God's commandments (which were just as much a part of the Law as were the promises.)

Thus, the light of God as revealed in nature, as revealed in the Old Testament Mosaic Law, and as revealed in God's providential guidance through historical events, were all incomplete, partial, and imperfect revelations of God's nature.

The light of God, as revealed through the great writings of the Hebrew prophets was also another great revelation of God, but the light of this revelation (as great as it was) was still a partial, imperfect, and incomplete revelation. The greatest writings of the greatest prophets were only preparatory revelations of the greatest revelation of all – the revelation of God through His Son – Jesus Christ!

If it is true that the writings of the Old Testament prophets were only imperfect reflections of the perfect revelation of Jesus, how much more true is it to say that the writings and teachings of the leaders of other religions, like Buddhism and Hinduism, are very incomplete and imperfect! We are

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not, by saying that, saying that there is no truth found in other religions, either before or after the coming of Jesus. We are saying that, at best, the light of truth found in other world religions is very imperfect and incomplete, and often very distorted because of the mixture of some truths with so much falsehood that is found in any religious system apart from Christianity!

Even the light of God revealed through the life and preaching of John the Baptist was not the perfect or true light of God. (We are not using 'true' in the sense of meaning 'true in contrast to false'; we are rather using 'True' in the sense of meaning 'complete in contrast to incomplete') John was rightly considered a great prophet, perhaps the greatest of all prophets. Many followed John the Baptist, and some of his followers even entertained exaggerated ideas about him. As great as was John, the cousin of Jesus and the one who stood close to Jesus, the Gospel writer makes it clear that John himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to 'that light'. *"There was a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. (John 1:6-8)* It is like saying, "John is the moon. The moon wonderfully witnesses to the fact that there is a sun which is reflecting its light upon the darkened earth through the moon. The moon is a witness to the greater light of the sun. Without the sun, there would be no moon. The sun is infinitely bigger and greater than the moon. The moon has no inherent light of its own. It only exists to reflect the light of the sun upon the darkened world. The sun which brightly shines in the noonday sky no longer needs the moon. He (the sun) must increase: I (the moon) must decrease!"

B. PROGRESSIVE LIGHT

The light – this light of God – *"was coming into the world."* (vs. 9) Gradually throughout history, the light of God's self-revelation was coming into the world. This speaks of process and progress. "From the beginning the divine light had shone. Always it was coming into the world." (Readings In St. John's Gospel; William Temple; pg. 9)

We have already noted that God revealed Himself gradually and incompletely and imperfectly through the order of nature, through the events of history, through the writings of Moses' law, through the prophetic words of the great Hebrew prophets, and more brightly through the powerful preaching of John the Baptist, who was sent as a witness to testify concerning the perfect Light - Jesus Christ. "From the first God was (so to speak) on His way to the world, advancing towards the Incarnation by preparatory revelations. He came in type and prophecy and judgment." (Westcott's commentary; pg. 7)

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The writer of the Hebrews wrote, *"Long ago God spoke in many different ways to our fathers through the prophets, telling them little by little about His plans. But now in these days He has spoken to us through His Son to whom He has given everything...."* (Hebrews 1:1, 2; Living Bible)

C. UNIVERSAL LIGHT

This true light of God which was gradually coming into the world *"gives light to every man."* (vs. 9) *"No man is wholly destitute of the illumination of 'the Light'. In nature, and life, and conscience it makes itself felt in various degrees to all."* (Westcott; pg. 7)

"Always it was coming into the world; always it enlightened every man alive in his reason and conscience. Every check on animal lust felt by the primitive savage, every stimulation to a nobler life, is God self-revealed within his soul...So it may be truly said that the conscience of the heathen man is the voice of Christ within him – though muffled by his ignorance. All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought, or conduct or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them. By the Word of God – that is to say, by Jesus Christ – Isaiah, and Plato, and Zoroaster, and Buddha, and Confucius conceived and uttered such truths as they declared. There is only one divine light; and every man in his measure is enlightened by it." (Readings In St. John's Gospel, pg. 9; William Temple)

There is only one light - God's Light – but God's Light was revealed gradually throughout history in various ways and in various degrees. Christ is the eternal Light of God – the Light which was revealed partially in the wonders of nature, in the writings of the Old Testament Law, in the acts of History, in the writings of the prophets, in the aspirations of the heathen, in the great ethical insights of the non-Christian systems of thought, in the enlightened conscience of seeking minds, in the loving responses of misguided heathen.

There have been many heathen people throughout history who served the living God, even though they never heard of the name of Jesus. Christ, the Light of God, has manifested Himself in the hearts of men, and many have been obedient to the Light, even though they had never heard of His earthly existence or were not acquainted with the splendor of His manifestation in the Incarnation. There have been many an American Indian or black men in the dark jungles of Africa who have followed the Light of God (inwardly revealed), i.e., Jesus Christ, without knowing of the earthly existence of Christ. In following their inner light, they were following Christ without knowing it! Many have built shrines to the unknown God and have faithfully served that unknown God, never realizing that whom they were serving sincerely, though ignorant, was none other than the Living Christ who manifested the Light of God concretely on earth during his 33 years of

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earthly existence in Palestine! "The Light which strives to reach every man is not some vague general light, but the present continuation of the Light which shone in Jesus as He called men by the Sea of Galilee." (The People Called Quakers; pg. 700; Trueblood) This Light reaches out toward every man, whether he is under the umbrella of Christian teaching, or under the domination of Communism, or entangled in the false teachings of a non-Christian religion.

Notes Trueblood: "Though this Light is seen in Jesus in its full and complete manifestation, it appears in a measure in every son and daughter of earth. It is the Light that lighteth every man who comes into the world. Thus the Christ of experience is identical with the Christ of history, though not limited to particular historical events and particular places. It is still true that Christ is the Way, but God, in His mercy, has made the knowledge of this Way open to men in countless fashions. The enormous advantage of this conception is that it keeps the uniqueness of Christ while avoiding the blasphemy of supposing that God condemns men for mere ignorance. This makes it possible to believe that there were many Christians before Christ because they saw something of the very Light which He was. There is no contradiction between the ideas that God has been revealing Himself, in sundry times and sundry places, and the other idea that God has revealed Himself fully in one time and one place. Such, in any case, is the faith which is neither so vague as to be meaningless nor so narrow as to be blasphemous." (The Philosophy of Religion; pg. 226)

All persons in history, whether living before or after the coming of Jesus to earth or whether or not they have been fortunate enough to know about the historical existence of Jesus, can be saved! Why? Because, "*the true light gives light to every man.*" (vs. 9) The possibility of salvation is universal. Wrote Robert Barclay (early Quaker writer): "God, who out of His infinite love sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, who tasted death for every man, hath given to every man, whether Jew or Gentile, Turk or Scythian, Indian or Barbarian, or whatsoever nation, country, or place, a certain day or time of visitation; during which day or time it is possible for them to be saved, and to partake of the fruit of Christ's death." (Quoted by Trueblood in 'The People Called Quakers'; pg. 77)

Notes Trueblood, "The idea of Christ as reaching out, as does Light, to all men, is particularly relevant today when we are highly conscious of the coexistence of many world religions. We are forced to re-examine the relationship of Christianity to Buddhism, to Hinduism, to Islam, etc. Such a re-examination makes us reconsider the whole reason for missionary activity. To claim that all non-Christian religions are intrinsically evil is to deny the obvious truth, for each of the major religions contains elements of undoubted spiritual strength. One cannot observe the discipline of a Buddhist monastery without recognizing this. But does such recognition undermine missions?"

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Not if the conception of the Eternal Light of Jesus is taken seriously. This means that the Eternal Christ has already been reaching into Buddhist hearts, and would do so without any help from us. Nevertheless we can help one another. The flame is there, but it can be made brighter by human instrumentality.

“Christ is, indeed, the Way, but men of different faiths can teach one another what they have learned of the Way, and those who know of the historic Christ have a special responsibility. The humble, yet truly dedicated, Christian missionary goes to others as a learner as well as a teacher. We are not so rich in spiritual resources that we can afford to neglect any. It is a striking fact that, when John Woolman, in the eighteenth century, went as a missionary to the American Indians, he told them that he had done so in order to learn something from them.” (The People Called Quakers; pgg. 78)

D. REJECTED LIGHT

Even though “*the true light gives light to every man*” (vs. 9), and even though it is possible for every man to be saved because of that True Light which lightens every man, there has been and continues to be a widespread rejection of that Light. Tragically, the Gospel says, “*Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.*”

Even though God has revealed His light to all men in various ways and in various degrees, “this light is not recognized for what it is. If it were, its fuller shining would always be welcomed. But it is attributed by each tribe or group to some historic or legendary founder or pioneer of their own, so that each claims to have a monopoly of the light itself, when in fact each has only a few rays of that light, which needs all the wisdom of all the human traditions to manifest the entire compass of its spectrum. Moreover it has to shine through veils of prejudice and obsession, so that even the rays received by each group among mankind are not clear and pure in the illumination which they give.

“So the light itself is unrecognized; and when it blazes out more fully, men refuse it, even though it is that by which they already walk. For these reasons it is true both that Christ is indeed the Desire of all Nations, and yet that he is always more and other than men desire until they learn of Him. To come to Him is always an act of self-surrender as well as of self-fulfillment and must be first experienced as self-surrender.

“But there is one nation specially prepared for the reception of the light in its fullness. Israel has received the light in a measure so full as to be called its own home, its own people, but when He came – (and here for the first time a pronoun unmistakably personal in its reference is used) – His own people were as completely unable to receive Him as any others had been to receive

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light fuller than that to which they were accustomed...This (the Gospel of John), is in one aspect a Gospel of Judgment. By their reaction to the impact of Christ men are judged, and take their position as children of darkness or children of light". (Verses 12: 35, 36) (Temple; pgs. 10, 11)

The Light of Truth comes in different degrees, and each man will be judged according to the degree of response to the light that he has personally received.

The knowledge of the Truth of God is communicated through a variety of means – orderly nature, individual conscience, witness of the Christian Church, the printed Word of the Bible. All men are not fortunate enough to have even heard of the historical existence of Jesus. All must be judged for the kind of response given to the degree and kind of light offered, but none will be condemned for rejecting what was unknown to them.

The degree to which one obediently or disobediently responds to the revealed truth that he has received, will determine the degree of one's reward or punishment. *"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."* (Luke 12: 47-48; NIV)

Notes Paul, "There will be sorrow and suffering for Jews and Gentiles alike who keep on sinning. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who obey Him, whether they are Jews or gentiles. For God treats everyone the same. He will punish sin wherever it is found. He will punish the heathen when they sin, even though they never had God's written laws, for down in their hearts they know right from wrong. God's laws are written within them; their own conscience accuses them, or sometimes excuses them. And God will punish the Jews for sinning because they have His written laws but don't obey them. They know what is right but don't do it. After all, salvation is not given to those who know what to do, unless they do it... *"The day will surely come when at God's command Jesus Christ will judge the secret lives of everyone, their inmost thoughts and motives; this is all part of God's great plan which I proclaim"*. (Romans 2: 9-16; Living Bible)

CONCLUSION

It is a great tragedy that the world that Jesus made and the world He came to dwell in for many years is the same world that (generally-speaking) rejected Him (vs. 10). But the few who did personally recognize and believe on Him, received power to become sons of God.

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Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is still present in His world. Will you recognize Him and accept Him as the true Light of God – the highest revelation of God? If you accept God's Light in Christ as self-surrender, then you will enjoy God's light as self-fulfillment. Jesus' light is either the means of your life or of your death, depending upon whether you accept that light or reject that light! Accept that Light today – the Light that reveals things as they really are, the Light that continues to shine brightly in a sin-darkened world, and the Light that comes to all persons! Accepting the Light of God, you accept the very life of God! (John 1:12) Submit to that Light today!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 2

1. **Long before Jesus came to earth (Incarnation), do you believe God was gradually revealing Himself to mankind (even to persons who had no contact with God's "chosen people", the Jews in the Old Testament)?**
2. **What does Matthew 10: 28 teach regarding God's knowledge of mankind (and about individual persons specifically)? (Note Hebrews 4: 13)**
3. **Have you ever had a time (experience) in your life when you felt that the all-knowing and all-seeing God spiritually "unmasked" you, to reveal the true nature of your heart and life and thoughts? If so, how did you react to this "divine light" (conviction) from God – yielded to God's Light or resisted God's Light? (Note Acts 9 and Acts 26: 19)**
4. **What happens to a person (sinner) who humbly accepts the Light of God's strong conviction in his life? What happens to the person (sinner) who rejects the Light of God's conviction?**
5. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The message of the Gospel may be either accepted or rejected, but it can never be eliminated".**
6. **Even though there has been throughout human history, widespread and heavy moral and spiritual "darkness", what confidence does the Christian believer have that truth shall ultimately win over falsehood, and light over darkness?**
7. **Why do Christians call the darkest day in human history "Good Friday"?**
8. **Tell to what extent you (as a believer) receive comfort and encouragement from the truth found in Christian teachings, as described in the following statement: "Even though there is a continuing battle between light and darkness, it is important to remember that the Resurrection of Jesus guarantees the ultimate victory of light over darkness."**
9. **Does the following statement have the 'ring' of logic, reason, common sense? "If the darkness of sin was unable to put out the Light of God's truth at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, it is certain that the darkness of sin cannot put out the Light of God and truth during less fierce moral battles throughout history. If the chief battle has been won, all other battles will be won!"**
10. **Give your personal interpretation of the following statement: "Evil may seem to have the upper hand on the first and second day, but evil cannot conquer on the third day!"**

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11. Is there Biblical support for the following “optimistic prediction” of the future of the world? -“All of life and nature will be redeemed and all evil will be destroyed. Light will reign forever!”
12. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “Jesus is the true or complete Light in contrast to other lesser and incomplete lights previously given to mankind before Jesus’ coming.”
13. In your own mind and perception, which of the following imperfect and partial “lights” (revelation) from God do you think had the greatest “impact” upon the minds and hearts of “seeking souls” before the time (incarnation) of Jesus:
 - _____ (a) The Light of Nature (Psalms 19: 1)
 - _____ (b) The Light of Historical Events
 - _____ (c) The Light of Old Testament Prophets
 - _____ (d) The Message of John the Baptist
 - _____ (e) The Writings of Moses’ Law
14. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following rather “startling” statements, regarding the Universal Light of Christ, progressively revealed to all mankind: “So it may be truly said that the conscience of the heathen man is the voice of Christ within him – though muffled by his ignorance. All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought, or conduct or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them...There is only one divine light; and every man in his measure is enlightened by it.” (William Temple)
15. Give your response or reaction to the following statement: “Christ, the Light of God, has manifested Himself in the hearts of men, and many have been obedient to the Light, even though they had never heard of His earthly existence or were not acquainted with the splendor of His manifestation in the Incarnation.”
16. Tell if you believe that Robert Barclay is accurate and Biblically-justified when he declares with conviction that for every human being (regardless of how “heathn” he is) there is “a certain day or time of visitation (of God’s Light which is Christ); during which day or time it is possible for them to be saved, and to partake of the fruit of Christ’s death.”
17. Why, according to the Scriptures, do some men love darkness rather than light?
18. Why is the act of “self-surrender” prerequisite to experiencing “self-fulfillment” in one’s life?

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19. **Share with someone why the following statement gives you considerable "comfort" or considerable "disturbance" – "The Light of Truth comes in different degrees, and each man will be judged according to the degree of response to the Light that he has personally received".**

20. **Is it possible for a Christian to believe in the exclusivity of Christ's atonement (i.e., that only through the finished work of Christ on the Cross can humans be saved and go to heaven), and at the same time to believe that earthly inhabitants who "walked in God's imperfect and partial lights, short of the light of the Incarnation, will be graciously and mercifully received by God into heaven (where their ignorance will be removed, to see for the first time their Saviour)?**

21. **Give your reaction (response) to the following statement: "The degree to which one obediently or disobediently responds to the revealed truth that he has received, will determine the degree of one's reward or punishment." (Read Luke 12: 47-48; Romans 2: 9-16)**

22. **From your personal experience and your observation of other persons, give your evidence of the truth of the following statement: "Jesus light is either the means of your life or of your death, depending upon whether you accept that light or reject that light!"**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT: "I AM THE LIFE!"

Scripture: *"⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood^{4a} it. ⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.^{1b} ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—". John 1: 4-12*

Text: *"In Him was life; and the Life was the Light of men."* (John 1:4)

INTRODUCTION

The Bible says that man is dead in trespasses and sins. Men of all ages have been filled with despair because of their sins. Man is captive to his selfish passions. Man is merely existing, but not really living.

PREPOSITION

Jesus is the life of man. Without Him, there is no true life, only existence.

- I. MAN'S NEED OF LIFE - THERE IS CHAOS WITHOUT CHRIST.
 - A. THERE IS CHAOS IN VALUES - MORALLY AND MATERIALLY
 - B. THERE IS CHAOS IN RELATIONSHIPS
- II. MAN'S SOURCE OF LIFE – CHRIST JESUS' COMPASSION
 - A. MAN'S COMMITMENT
 - 1. To believe in Jesus means to be completely convinced in our mind that Jesus is who He said He was.
 - 2. To believe in Jesus means to commit one's life to Jesus and to transfer one's complete loyalty to Him.

CONCLUSION

Before a sinner can find new life in Christ, he must recognize his need for change and be willing to accept the conditions that are necessary for the change – initial repentance and acceptance of Christ, followed by continuous belief in Christ.

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CHAPTER 3

"I AM THE LIFE!"

INTRODUCTION

The Bible says that man is dead in trespasses and sins. Men of all ages have been filled with despair because of their sins. What Seneca said hundreds of years ago, is still true today, "They hate their sins but cannot leave them." Each man experiences a deep sense of condemnation, alienation, and fear. Man is captive to his selfish passions. Man is entangled in the fierce chaos of modern society. Man is merely existing, but not really living.

PREPOSITION

The word 'Life' (in some form, noun or verb) is used more than fifty times in the Gospel of John. Jesus, indeed, is the life of man. Without Him, there is no true life, only existence.

I. MAN'S NEED OF LIFE

The Bible says there is chaos without God (Ephesians 2: 1-3, 12). There is chaos without Christ. There is chaos without Christ.

A. THERE IS CHAOS IN VALUES - MORALLY AND MATERIALLY.

Man has lost his grip on life because he doesn't have his eyes on an absolute moral standard, by which to order his conduct. With no moral standard, man is led in the direction of his lustful passions, which eventually results in complete moral degeneracy. Captive to his lust and passion, man has descended to the level of a beast. Modern entertainment shows us that man has changed love into lust. The words of a popular song well express man's 'beastly' conception of life.

"I will never love you,
The cost of love's too dear,
But though I'll never love you
I'll live with you one year."

There is not only chaos in moral values, but also in material values. Goods are more important than God. Property is more important than people. Money is more important than Church; success is measured in terms of: a large bank account, expensive furniture, a new car, and glamorous trips. To many people, "Life consisteth in the abundance of things that a man possesseth." Man has forgotten the hidden and noble values of life in his preoccupation and pursuit of material things. Man's ceaseless striving for

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money has caused mental and spiritual chaos in his life.

B. THERE IS CHAOS IN RELATIONSHIPS

There is a marked dissolution in the home life. This is evidenced by a rising rate in divorce oftentimes caused by immorality and alcoholism. The tragic results of divorce are seen in maladjusted children, mentally disturbed adults, and bitter remorse and memories. The break-up in the home life is further evidenced by juvenile delinquency, trashy novels, TV programs, and illicit moving pictures. Multiple crimes, dishonesty, disregard for authority, and an increasing prison population are tragic commentaries on the dissolution of American home life. Our age of despair is further seen in the continual race tension, caused by hatred, intolerance, and prejudice.

Anyone with any perception at all, will readily admit that there is much chaos in the world, which is caused by sin. Most people merely exist, not living an abundant and meaningful life.

II. MAN'S SOURCE OF LIFE – CHRIST

A. JESUS' COMPASSION.

John proclaimed, *"In Him was life, and the life was the light of man."* (1: 4) Throughout John's entire Gospel, he refers to Jesus as the source of all life. Jesus claimed that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life (14:6) Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* (10:10) Jesus came to give zest and enthusiasm to life. Christ came to forgive man, to release him from condemnation. He came to destroy the alienation that man so deeply feels, by providing friendship and fellowship with man. Jesus came to eliminate man's fear and give him confidence and rest: ²⁸*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Mathew 11:28). Jesus came to release man from the captivity of his selfish passions, and to give man new aspirations and a powerful Presence whereby these aspirations can be reached. In short, Jesus came to save man from a life of chaos and to impart physical, mental, and spiritual health. Jesus came to add a new and wonderful dimension to life, with Jesus Himself at the center of all values and relationships.

B. MAN'S COMMITMENT

Jesus has abundant life to offer to all men. What must a man do to receive this new life? What does it mean to have this new life?

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John gives us the answers to these questions. *"To all those who did receive Him, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God."* (John 1:12)

Man receives this new life by believing in the name of Jesus. What does it mean to believe?

1. To believe in Jesus means to be completely convinced in our mind that Jesus is who He said He was. Jesus said he was divine, and that He had been with God for all eternity before the world was created. After one has investigated the account of Jesus' life and teachings, one must be completely convinced that Jesus was indeed divine, that He was the Son of God. Either Jesus was what He claimed to be (divine), or He was a liar or a lunatic. There are no other alternatives. No one can deny that He was divine, and simply call him a teacher, for a great teacher would not deliberately lie or deceive the person by calling himself something that he is not. Either Jesus was divine or He was a deceiver. However, it is highly unlikely that a fraud, deceiver, or liar would talk about great moral principles and urge people to be good, loving, and kind, if the fraud himself knows that his life will not measure up to the very standards that he himself established. It is unlikely that a liar would openly condemn lying. There is every bit of evidence that Jesus was what he claimed to be – the divine Son of God.
2. To believe in Jesus means to commit one's life to Jesus and to transfer one's complete loyalty to Him. (Examples: person saved by lifeguard; baby rests complete weight on mother's breast.) It means having confidence in Jesus and taking Him at His Word. It means having faith in Jesus as the only source of life, whereby our chaotic life may be restored to soundness, wholeness, and health. Such commitment requires an active obedience to the will of God. It means giving up all of one's right to self, and becoming subject to the complete Lordship of Christ.

In John 1:12, 'received' and 'gave' are in the Greek aorist tense, signifying that spiritual adoption is decisive and complete on God's part. However, while spiritual adoption is immediate and complete, the full realization of sonship is gradual and progressive and such sonship is dependent upon continuous belief in Christ ('believe' is a present active participle). The act of adoption is immediate and decisive, but

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relationship of sonship is progressive and dependent upon the continuous exercise of belief in Christ.

What kind of life does Jesus offer man? It is eternal life, and eternal life is not merely duration of existence, but rather a new quality of life, a quality of life that experiences something of the very life of God Himself! (Example: When I offered a 27 year old alcoholic eternal life, he replied to me, "If eternal life means living forever like the 'hell' of my past 27 years, then I don't want eternal life." I quickly explained that eternal life is not mere duration of time, but rather a new quality of life).

CONCLUSION

John presents Jesus as the source of all life. Because of man's personal chaotic, corrupt state, he needs this life. However, before he can find this life, he must recognize his need for change and be willing to accept the conditions that are necessary for the change – initial repentance and acceptance of Christ, followed by continuous belief in Christ.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 3

- 1. Generally speaking, do you believe it is accurate to say that modern man does merely exist, not really living, that most persons experience a deep sense of condemnation, alienation, and fear?**
- 2. Do you believe that, without Jesus in one's heart and life, there is no true life, only existence?**
- 3. How does Ephesians 2:1-3, 12 describe the life without God?**
- 4. When one no longer believes in the existence (reality) of an objective moral standard, what are the results in one's life, morally and materially?**
- 5. Do you believe that much of modern entertainment reveals that man has changed love into lust, resulting in the exploitation of humans for selfish gain and indulgence?**
- 6. How would you describe the modern-day manifestation of materialism, in terms of persons' attitude towards people and towards things?**
- 7. Practically speaking, tell what it means for you to live by the Biblical principle: "Life does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesseth."**
- 8. What evidence in there today that there is a marked dissolution in American home life? What specifically are you doing to enhance your own home life, to make it more godly and Christlike?**
- 9. What is the result when a sinner surrenders himself/herself to the Living God (Jesus Christ)? (Note John 1:4; John 14:6; John 10:10; Matthew 11:28)**
- 10. What must a person do to receive the new life that Christ has to offer? (John 1:12)**
- 11. What is meant by the statement: "Jesus is either a; liar, a lunatic, or LORD"?**
- 12. How is a person's head (mind), heart (emotions) and will involved in the process of becoming a true follower of Christ (a born again Christian)?**
- 13. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The act of adoption into God's family is immediate and decisive, but relationship of sonship is progressive and dependent upon the continuous exercise of belief in Christ."**
- 14. As a result of your own conversion, through faith in Christ, tell some of the changes in the quality of your life since you committed your life to Christ. Why is your continuous belief (trust) in Christ absolutely necessary if you are to continue to enjoy your new life?**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT: "I AM THE HAPPY WEDDING GUEST"!

Scripture: *"¹On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."⁴ "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."¹¹ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. (John 2:1-11)*

Text: *"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on him." (John 2:11)*

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is concerned with joy. His first miracle of compassion – to save a bridegroom from needless embarrassment and to extend the time of joy and festivities!

PREPOSITION

- I. JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE WAS SYMBOLIC OF GLADNESS AND REJOICING AND SET THE TONE FOR JESUS' ENTIRE MINISTRY.
- II. JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE IS SYMBOLIC OF THE CHANGES THAT JESUS BRINGS INTO LIFE, BY GOD'S POWER OF GRACE AND LOVE.

CONCLUSION

Jesus gave new life to that party and to those wedding relationships. Jesus wants to give new life to you – Life spelled with a capital L. Jesus is the way to real living. Come immediately to HIM!

JESUS - "THE GREAT 'I AM'!"

CHAPTER 4

"I AM A HAPPY WEDDING GUEST!"

INTRODUCTION

Someone observed that, again and again, religion (and even Christianity) has gained the reputation of being gloom-encompassed. "Ibsen's Julian said: 'Have you looked at these Christians closely? Hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked, flat-breasted all; they brood their lives away, unspurred by ambition; the sun shines for them, but they do not see it; the earth offers them its fullness, but they desire it not; all their desire is to renounce and suffer, that they may come to die.'

"Once Carlyle was propounding his favorite view; that the worship of sorrow as the highest idea of moral goodness, and that it was to be found in the New Testament. Whereat Harriet Martineau turned on him with the retort: 'I think Jesus Christ lived one of the most joyous lives'.

Jesus loved the birds, the lilies, the crops, and watching the children playing games. There is a clear sense in which he loved the world...It was Jesus' prayer that 'his joy should be in his people, and that their joy should be full' (John 15: 11)". (In the Hands of God; Barclay; pgs. 66, 67)

Jesus was no long-faced eccentric who frowned on man's happiness. In fact, Jesus was the bringer of happiness and the participant in happy occasions. Jesus enters into people's joys and sorrows. He often dined with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus – his dear friends. He ate dinner with many, and was happy to accept invitations to people's homes. Jesus had a joyous countenance – a countenance which imparted confidence and peace to others. Jesus spent time with publicans and sinners, so much so that his critics called him a gluttonous man, a winebibber and a friend of publicans and sinners. (Matthew 11:19) Jesus enjoyed the company of children and doubtless laughed and played with them. Someone has pictured Jesus as the 'Domesticated God'. Jesus brought God into the home circle and into the ordinary things of life.

It is significant that Jesus' very first miracle (called a 'Sign') was at a marriage of a young couple. Jesus made water into wine to keep people from leaving a joyous occasion too soon. Wine is the symbol of joy to the Jew. In fact, they have a saying: "Without wine there is no joy." So Jesus is concerned with joy. His first miracle of compassion – to save a bridegroom from needless embarrassment and to extend the time of joy and festivities! "Turning the water into wine, however, is not the important part of this story (although Jesus was concerned in the physical and social welfare of people). The real miracle is the fact that Christ the Son of God, was at the wedding." This shows that Jesus "was not aloof and hard to know. He was one of them and entered into their joys and also into their troubles." (Allen; 'Touch of the Mater's Hand'; pg. 14)

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This miracle has present-day significance. We tend to identify with it. For "it is still true that those who know Jesus intimately instinctively turn to Him when things go wrong – and they never find Him wanting." (Barclay; p.87)

PREPOSITION

This first miracle shows that the mission of Jesus was to impart Joy to life and to relationships. He came not to condemn but to save. "Jesus was no frowning saint" (Allan) Jesus came to make life beautiful and gracious and overflowing with love and grace.

I. JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE WAS SYMBOLIC OF GLADNESS AND REJOICING AND SET THE TONE FOR JESUS' ENTIRE MINISTRY.

"This miracle was the sign of an entirely new relationship between man and God. It put a new meaning into religion. God gave to Moses the power to perform miracles and when He appeared before Pharaoh, His first miracle was a turning of water into blood. It was a symbol of death and destruction. Jesus turned water into wine, a symbol of gladness and rejoicing. His coming was not to condemn and to destroy but to bless and make happy." (Allen; pg. 12)

Joy was the way of life with Jesus. Joy is a predominate theme in the New Testament, and is described as the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the Christian. It is said that St. Theresa disliked "gloomy people" and prayed to be delivered from "frowning saints".

Tertullian said, "The Christian saint is hilarious". Notes Sangster: "The summons to rejoice is sounded no less than seventy times in the New Testament...Honest men at Pentecost thought that the apostles were drunk, and, whenever the living water has burst fresh from the rock again, the same exuberant gladness has been manifested. The early Franciscans had it; the early Methodists; the early Salvationists...When Dr. Farmer, organist at Harrow, pleaded with the Salvationist drummer not to hit the drum so hard, the beaming bandsman replied: 'Lord bless you, sir, since I've been converted, I'm so happy, I could burst the blooming drum.'" (Sangster's Readings; pg. 144)

One of the most significant characteristics in the life of a new born Christian is a sense of joy, joy because guilt is resolved and a new relationship with God is established. I have often observed this!

Remember, there is a great difference between pleasure and joy. Pleasure is dependent on circumstances which come and go, but Joy in God is permanent. Joy comes by obedient submission to Christ's commands. Joy is inseparably connected with Faith or commitment, for Faith is simply commitment to Christ's Lordship.

Says E.S. Jones: "I'm a happy man because my happiness is not dependent on happenings, but upon the joy of belonging to Him, whatever happens. That is an

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invincible joy. The funny thing about it all is that I'm getting happier as I get grayer. I'm happier at eighty-three than I was at twenty-three. I was happy at twenty-three because I had Jesus; I'm happier at eighty-three because I have Jesus, but a Jesus who has the sum total of reality behind Him. So I have cosmic laughter because I have a cosmic Christ. He fills me and the universe." (Autobiography, Song of Ascents' pg. 349)

Says E. Stanley Jones: "There is more unalloyed joy in being a Christian to the square inch than there is to the square mile outside Him. When I started on a six-month' evangelistic tour of the East, Mary Webster wrote and said: 'Have fun with Jesus.' Sounded flippant at first, but the more I thought of it the flippancy turned to fact. That is exactly what I'm having as a Christian: I'm having fun, and it is with Jesus. It is fun to be a Christian." (Autobiography; pg. 342)

"It was said of Alice Freeman Palmer, the great teacher, by one of her scholars: 'She made me feel as if I was bathed in sunshine.'" (Barclay; John, pg. 85)

C.H. Spurgeon, in his book Lectures to my Students says: "I commend cheerfulness to all who would win souls, not levity and frothiness, but a genial, happy spirit. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there will be more souls led to heaven by a man who wears heaven in his face than by one who bears Tartarus in his looks." (Ibid; 85)

Says Barclay "Jesus never counted it a crime to be happy. Why should His followers do so?"

Wrote the apostle: "*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do this you will experience God's peace...Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice! Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do.*" (Philippians 4)

The Bible teaches that the Christian can be happy in spite of circumstances and problems. "*Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally I full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete.*" (James 1: 2-4) If 'not because of', then 'in spite of'.

II. JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE IS SYMBOLIC OF THE CHANGES THAT JESUS BRINGS INTO LIFE, BY GOD'S POWER OF GRACE AND LOVE.

"There are six tones water pots; and at the command of Jesus the water in then turned to wine. Now according to the Jews, seven is the number which is absolute and complete and perfect; and six is the number which is incomplete, unfinished, and imperfect. The six stone water pots stand for all the imperfections of the Jewish

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law. Jesus came to do away with the imperfections of the law, and to put in their place the new wine of the gospel of His grace. Jesus, by His coming, turned the imperfection of the law into the perfection of grace. There is another thing to note in this connection. Remember that every detail in a story told by John is meaningful. There were six water pots; each held between twenty and thirty gallons of water. Jesus turned the water into wine. That would give anything up to one hundred and eighty gallons of wine. Simply to state that fact is to show that John did not mean the story to be taken with crude literalness. What John did mean to say is this, that when the grace of Jesus comes to man, there is enough and to spare for all. No wedding party on earth could drink one hundred and eighty gallons of wine. No need on earth can exhaust the Grace of Christ. There is a glorious superabundance in the grace of Christ...the grace has become illimitable, sufficient, and more than sufficient for every need." (Barclay's John; pg. 89)

Someone said that if Jesus were to come back to live on earth today, it is likely that He would turn "wine into water", because alcohol is the cause of so much grief. I think it must be recognized that the wine of Jesus' day was different than the wine of today. Some scholars, who have researched the use of wine in Bible days, point out that the wine of that day was often diluted considerably with water, probably two parts wine to three parts water.

"To the question of personal use of intoxicants, self-discipline and self-denial, rather than self-indulgence, are the keynote to Jesus' teaching on such personal habits." (Turner; Aldersgate series; pg. 29)

The Bible and Its Wine by Charles W. Ewing says "I rebel at the thought that the guests at this marriage were already in a state of intoxication and that the Lord 'manifested' His glory' (John 2:11) by miraculously furnishing them with six water pots more of an intoxicant that could only increase the debauchery. How could the Lord 'manifest His glory' by making it possible for such drunkenness to be prolonged or increased?"

"On the other hand, if they had been drinking unfermented wine, there would be no inconsistency in Jesus providing the feast with a no intoxicant more delicious than what they had been enjoying. This certainly would 'manifest His glory'".

"If as we are told the words 'well drunk' indicate that they were inebriated, how would they be in a position to recognize that which was better inasmuch as their sense of taste would have been dulled and their minds stupefied"?

"He who said in Habakkuk 2: 15, '*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle (khamah, poison) to him, and maketh him drunken, cannot provide a drink, a poison,*' in John 2: 10 which will make men drunk or increase their drunkenness". (pg. 140)

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We must interpret this miracle against the background of the Jewish culture during Jesus' day. To the Jew, wine typified joy.

We must interpret this miracle against the background of the entire Gospel and keep in mind the purpose for which Jesus came into the world – to die on the Cross to redeem mankind from sin and from the bondage of the law as exemplified by the Pharisaical way of life. 'My hour has not yet come' speaks of the hour of Jesus' death on the cross. By what Jesus did, even at this happy wedding occasion, He was showing through a 'sign' what the purpose of His life and ministry would be, namely, to replace the 'water' of Judaism with the 'wine' of Christianity, to replace the 'water' of the law with the 'wine' of the Gospel, to replace the 'water' of Christlessness with the 'wine' of the richness and the fullness of eternal life in Christ.

"Wine, lavishly provided and freely offered, was a fitting symbol of the full salvation to be won by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God." (Tasker: pgs. 56, 57)

The wine served at the end of the celebration was better than the wine served at the beginning of the celebration. Not only does this miracle show us the marvelous changes effected by the touch of Christ, but it also communicates to us that the wine (or, joy of Christianity) becomes greater towards the end of 'life's celebration'. "There is always more and better to come." (Temple; pgs. 36, 37) "Sweeter and better as the days go by" – should this not describe the increasing joy of the Christian life? "As we deepen our fellowship with God, made known in Christ, at every stage we may say 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'" (Temple; pg. 37)

The purpose of this miracle, which is called a 'sign' by the writer of the Gospel, is to incite deeper personal trust in the hearts of Jesus' disciples who observed the miracle, and to manifest the glory of God. All of the miracles or signs in this Gospel are for the purpose of primarily inciting belief and glorifying God, and only secondarily for the purpose of manifesting God's personal compassion and mercy towards those for whom he performs the miracles. "In our Gospel (John) the motive of compassion, so evident in the Synoptic accounts (Mark 1: 41), is almost lost sight of, and Jesus' miracles become rather exhibitions of divine power whereby he 'displays His glory' and inspires belief in His claims." (Macgregor; 54) "The miracles are also 'signs', in the sense that they are symbolical, important not for their own sake, but as types of spiritual truth." (Ibid; 54)

This miracle of turning the water into wine "is a 'sign' that one has appeared who will introduce a new and spiritual worship." (Ibid; 54)

Each of the six water pots contained about 20 gallons of water, the water being used to carry out the necessary Old Testament prescriptions regarding ceremonial washing of the hands before eating and even between courses in the meal. By changing the water into wine, Jesus is symbolically showing by this miracle the replacement of the Old Testament law with the newness of the New Testament

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Gospel. The way of Judaism is imperfect (as symbolized, not only by the water of ceremonialism contained in the water pots, but also as symbolized by the number of water pots, which is six, - the number of imperfection in contrast to the number seven which the Jews considered the number of completeness and perfection). The way of Christ which is the way of grace and mercy is the way of perfection and completeness. The liberal amount of water which was changed into wine shows symbolically the liberality of God's love and mercy in His treatment towards sinners in the new dispensation of grace in contrast to the old dispensation of law. "This miracle was the sign of an entirely new relationship between man and God. It put a new meaning into religion. God gave to Moses the power to perform miracles and when he appeared before Pharaoh, his first miracle was turning of water into blood. It was a symbol of death and destruction. Jesus turned water into wine, a symbol of gladness and rejoicing. His coming was not to condemn and to destroy but to bless and make happy." (Allen; pg. 12)

"Whenever Jesus comes into life, there comes a new quality which is like turning water into wine. Without Jesus life is dull, and stale, and flat; when Jesus comes into life, life becomes vivid and sparkling and exciting. Without Jesus life is drab and uninteresting; with Jesus life is thrilling and wonderful and exhilarating." (Barclay; pg. 90) "This story emphasizes the 'superabundant liberality of Christ's bestowments.'" (Macgregor; pg. 53)

"The water contained in these vessels was used for the ceremonial washing of hands as well as for the cleansing of drinking utensils. It was indicative both of the nature and of the weakness of Pharisaism. It was this water that Jesus turned into wine – wine which, because it gives life and strength and, as the Psalmist said: '*make glad the heart of man*', is a fitting symbol of the new spiritual power made available for mankind by the shedding of the blood of Jesus". (Tasker; 55) "It was because men had no wine, because they had no inherent strength to save themselves from the dire predicament in which they stood as sinners, that Jesus was destined, in Isaiah's words, '*to tread the wine-press alone*', and *pour out the wine of his own precious blood*. (pg. 56) "He would exercise His supernatural power on this occasion. He would act because wine, lavishly provided and freely offered, was a fitting symbol of the full salvation to be won by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God." (pgs. 56, 57)

"Jesus changes the water of Judaism into the wine of Christianity, the water of Christlessness into the wine of the richness and the fullness of eternal life in Christ, the water of the law into the wine of the gospel." (Mooris; pg. 176)

"Wine is the symbol of the new covenant and of the heavenly joy."

CONCLUSION

Christ wants to fill our cups today – supply all our needs according to the riches of God's resources. Christ stands ready to help us, but the one requirement is faith which leads to obedience. "His mother said to the servant at the wedding, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you,

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do it.' If they had not had faith enough to do what they were told the miracle never would have been performed." (Allen; pg. 16)

Jesus' offers to the world as shown symbolically by Jesus' 1st miracle, which brought great joy and satisfaction to the wedding guests.

Jesus' method of bringing joy to the world – (through his death – his 'hour' by which he replaced the 'water' of the law with the 'wine' of the Gospel)

Human appropriation of joy, through obedient faith (shown by Mary's trust and obedience, even though she had limited knowledge).

Do you want joy, real joy, and wonderful joy?
Let Jesus come into your heart.
Your sins He'll wash away,
Your night He'll turn to day
Your life, He'll make it over anew.

Jesus gave new life to that party and to those wedding relationships. Jesus wants to give new life to you – Life spelled with a capital. Jesus said, "I am the way of Life." Jesus is the way to real living. Come immediately to HIM!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 4

1. In spite of the fact that Jesus acquainted with grief, what evidence is there that Jesus lived one of the most joyous lives?
2. Why is it such a discredit to Christianity when professing Christians look 'hollow-eyed' and 'forlorn' and 'depressed' and 'passive'? What message do 'frowning saints' communicate to the world around them?
3. In what way was Jesus' first miracle at the wedding feast at Cana, a manifestation of compassion?
4. In contrast to the miracle which Moses performed in the presence of Pharaoh when the water was turned into blood, what did Jesus' miracle of turning the water into wine symbolize?
5. Do you believe that the following statement accurately interprets the significance of Jesus' first miracle at Cana of Galilee? - "By what Jesus did, even at this happy wedding occasion, He was showing through a 'sign' what the purpose of His life and ministry would be, namely, to replace the 'water' of Judaism with the 'wine' of Christianity, to replace the 'water' of the law with the 'wine' of the Gospel, to replace the 'water' of Christlessness with the 'wine' of the richness and the fullness of eternal life in Christ".
6. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Wine, lavishly provided and freely offered, was a fitting symbol of the full salvation to be won by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God."
7. What response would you give to a person who claims, on the basis of Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine, that it is morally and scripturally permissible for a believer to drink alcoholic beverages socially?

Give your response to the following statements which are given on page 140 of the book entitled "The Bible and Its Wines".

I rebel at the thought that the guests at this marriage were already in a state of intoxication and that the Lord "manifested His glory" (John 2:11) by miraculously furnishing them with six water pots more of an intoxicant that could only increase the debauchery. How could the Lord "manifest His glory" by making it possible for such drunkenness to be prolonged or increased?

On the other hand, if they had been drinking unfermented wine, there would be no inconsistency in Jesus providing the feast with a no intoxicant more delicious than what they had been enjoying. This certainly would "manifest His glory."

If as we are told the words "well drunk" indicate that they were inebriated, how

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would they be in a position to recognize that which was better inasmuch as their sense of taste would have been dulled and their minds stupefied?

He who said in Habakkuk 2: 15, "*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle (khamah, poison) to him, and maketh him drunken cannot provide a drink, a poison,*" in John 2: 10 which will make men drunk or increase their drunkenness.

8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following interpretation: "The wine served at the end of the celebration was better than the wine served at the beginning of the celebration. Not only does this miracle show us the marvelous changes effected by the touch of Christ, but it also communicates to us that the wine (or, the joy of Christianity) becomes greater towards the end of 'life's celebration'. 'Sweeter and better as the days go by' – should this not describe the increasing joy of the Christian life?"
9. In terms of Jewish numerology, what significance does the number '6' and the number '7' have, in the minds of Jewish people?
10. Give your comments on the following statements: "The way of Christ which is the way of grace and mercy is the way of perfection and completeness. The liberal amount of water which was changed into wine shows symbolically the liberality of God's love and mercy in His treatment towards sinners in the new dispensation of grace in contrast to the old dispensation of law."
11. From your own personal experience and from your observation of other Christians, give examples that illustrate the truth of the following statements: "There is more unalloyed joy in being a Christian to the square inch than there is to the square mile outside Him."
12. What feature in Jesus' first miracle at Cana of Galilee, illustrate the fact that God's grace is all-sufficient and abundantly available to meet every human need on earth?
13. Feel free to 'expand' on the following 'points' which seek to summarize the message of John 2: 1-11.
14. Jesus' offers joy to the world (as shown symbolically by Jesus' 1st miracle which brought great joy and satisfaction to wedding guests.)
15. Jesus' method of bringing joy to the world – (through his death – his 'hour' by which He replaces the 'water' of the law with the 'wine of the Gospel)
16. Human appropriation of joy, though obedient faith (shown by Mary's trust and obedience, even though she had limited knowledge).

OUTLINE - CHAPTER 5

JESUS - "THE GREAT 'I AM'!"

SUBJECT: "I AM THE OBJECT OF TRUE WORSHIP!"

SCRIPTURE: " ¹²After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days. ¹³When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (John 2: 12-16)

TEXT: "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise". (John 2: 16)

INTRODUCTION

What made Jesus so angry on that day, during the Jewish Passover celebration? Jesus was angry because the Jewish leaders were making it difficult, if not impossible, for the common Jewish worshippers to worship God truly and sincerely. In other words, the actions and example of the religious leaders resulted in hindering the people's communion with God in prayer.

PROPOSITION

In Jesus' dramatic act of cleansing the Temple, Jesus teaches us some important lessons regarding the nature of true worship. (1) True worship consists of reverence for God, not exploitation or discrimination of men. (2) True worship consists of reality in personal communion, not irrelevance in meaningless ritualism. (3) True worship consists in renewal through prayer, not confusion through distraction.

- I. REVERENCE FOR GOD. (Not Exploitation or Discrimination of Men)**
 - A. THERE IS ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION.**
 - B. THERE IS SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION.**
 - C. THERE IS RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.**
 - D. THERE IS DOCTRINAL DISCRIMINATION.**
- II. REALITY IN WORSHIP. (Not Irrelevance in Ritualism)**
- III. RENEWAL THROUGH PRAYER. (Not Confusion through Distraction)**

CONCLUSION

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What is true worship? It includes reverence for God, made possible in the atmosphere of love and acceptance. The unity of the faith in the bond of peace must be felt by all – for this is the atmosphere in a Church service which is conducive for true reverence and worship.

Reality in worship means that all irrelevant ritualism must be eliminated. Notes Barclay, "A liturgy is a means of worshipping God; but an elaborate liturgy can become an end in itself, so that the means and the method of worship end by becoming more important than the worship itself."

Real worship means renewal through prayer, not confusion through distraction. It is still true that God's House is not a house of merchandise but a 'house of prayer'. Therefore, quietness, meditation and prayer should still be main ingredients of worship.

The call to true worship comes to us yet. Will we respond to that call?

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CHAPTER 5

"I AM THE OBJECT OF TRUE WORSHIP!"

INTRODUCTION

How do you react to this picture of Jesus which we have in John 2: 12-16? Does it come to you as a shock that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, became so angry that He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle, and that He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables?

What made Jesus so angry on that day, during the Jewish Passover celebration? Jesus was angry because the Jewish leaders were making it difficult, if not impossible, for the common Jewish worshippers to worship God truly and sincerely. In other words, the actions and example of the religious leaders resulted in hindering the people's communion with God in prayer.

PROPOSITION

In Jesus' dramatic act of cleansing the Temple, Jesus teaches us some important lessons regarding the nature of true worship. (1) True worship consists of reverence for God, not exploitation or discrimination of men. (2) True worship consists of reality in personal communion, not irrelevance in meaningless ritualism. (3) True worship consists in renewal through prayer, not confusion through distraction.

I. REVERENCE FOR GOD (Not Exploitation or Discrimination of Men)

"The Passover was the greatest of all the Jewish feasts. The law laid it down that every adult male Jew who lived within fifteen miles of Jerusalem was bound to attend it. But it was not only the Jews in Palestine who came to the Passover. By this time Jews were scattered all over the world, but they never forgot their ancestral faith and their ancestral land; and it was the dream and aim of every Jew, no matter in what land he stayed, to celebrate at least one Passover in Jerusalem. Astonishing as it may sound, it is likely that as many as two and a quarter million Jews sometimes assembled in the Holy City to keep the Passover.

"There was a tax that every Jew over nineteen years of age must pay. That was the Temple tax. It was necessary that all should pay that tax so that the Temple sacrifices and Temple ritual might be carried out day by day...What enraged Jesus was that pilgrims to the Passover who could ill afford it, were being fleeced at an exorbitant rate by the money-changes. It was a rampart and shameless social injustice – and what was worse, it was being done in the name of religion.

"Besides the money-changes there were also the sellers of oxen and sheep and doves. Frequently a visit to the Temple meant a sacrifice. Many a pilgrim would wish to make thank-offering for a favorable journey to the Holy City: and most acts and

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events in life had their appropriate sacrifice. It might therefore seem to be a natural and helpful thing that the victims for the sacrifices could be bought in the Temple court. It might well have been so. But the law was that any animal offered in sacrifice must be perfect and unblemished. The Temple authorities had appointed inspectors to examine the victims which were to be offered. The fee for inspection was 1p. If a worshipper bought a victim outside the Temple, it was to all intents and purposes certain that it would be rejected after examination. Again that might not have mattered much, but a pair of doves could cost as little as 4p outside the Temple, and as much as 75p inside. Here again was bare-faced extortion at the expense of poor and humble pilgrims, who were practically blackmailed into buying their victims from the Temple booths if they wished to sacrifice at all – once more a glaring social injustice aggravated by the fact that it was perpetrated in the name of pure religion. (Barclay's John; pgs. 109-111)

Worship means to value highly the worth of God, i.e., to appreciate something of the greatness and the majesty of God. That is why we come to Church services – to grow in our appreciation of God's greatness and to grow in our love for God. That is why the many Jewish pilgrims had come to the Jerusalem Temple on that Passover Day – to worship God, to reverence the Holy One! However, the Jewish leaders did not come for that noble purpose. They had ulterior motives. Behind the mask of pure religion, their intention was evil and their motives were ulterior. They came to the Temple to exploit the people economically. They intended to line their own pockets with money. Said Jesus to them, as He drove them and the livestock out, *"Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"* (2:16)

The Church and its leaders today must be facilitators of true worship, not destroyers of true worship. The Church and its leaders must always serve the people's needs, never exploit the people to their own selfish advantage!

Jesus' action of cleansing the Temple is not only a motivation for true worship, but it is, at the same time, a warning against exploitation of people who come to the Temple or Church worship. In considering this warning of Jesus, let us consider some of the ways that churches and Church leaders can still today exploit people or show discrimination. In looking at the possible types of exploitation or discrimination, let us be positively motivated to be a Church which encourages true worship, to be a Church where people are helped to reverence God in true worship.

A. THERE IS RELIGIOUS EXPLOITATION.

There is religious exploitation. All of the cults today are guilty of this. By using 'fear tactics', 'pressure tactics', cunning and craftiness, and even mass 'brain washing', cultic leaders are able to build a large gathering of followers. Some religious leaders, like Jim Jones, are fanatical, overpowering personalities who use a variety of power tactics (including fear and suspicion, and pleasure, and brainwashing) to get a following. The Moonies, as well as

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many other cults today, are Master Deceivers. People in these cultic groups are not taught to reverence the God of love and mercy as shown in the person of Jesus, but they are instead pressured to follow a certain leader to adopt a certain life style which brings glory to that leader, and wealth to the movement which that leader controls.

A preacher or a religious movement must never be guilty of exploitation. There must be no 'playing upon' people's emotions or weaknesses for selfish advantage, and no attempt by the leader to get a personal following. Paul, the great apostle, wrote to the Corinthians: *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."* (I Corinthians 2: 4, 5) Paul further says in 2 Corinthians 4:2 (in the living Bible): *"We do not try to trick people into believing – we are not interested in fooling anyone. We never try to get anyone to believe that the Bible teaches what it doesn't. All such shameful methods we forego. We stand in the presence of God as we speak and so we tell the truth, as all who know us will agree."* (2 Corinthians 4: 2)

B. THERE IS ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION.

There is economic exploitation. As we just mentioned, there are religious leaders today – false prophets and teachers – who are out to exploit people economically. They are out to collect 'tithes and offerings', not for the Lord's work (as the Scriptures command), but for themselves and their own selfish and indulgent causes. Even Paul, the great apostle was accused of exploitation, and therefore he had to defend himself. Wrote Paul to the Corinthian Church *"Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?"* (II Corinthians 12: 17-18; NIV)

The verses just before these describe the accusation which the Corinthians were throwing in the face of Paul. *"Now I am coming to you again, the third time; and it is still not going to cost you anything, for I don't want your money. I want you! And anyway, you are my children, and little children don't pay for their father's and mother's food – it's the other way around; parents supply food for their children. I am glad to give you myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me. Some of you are saying 'It's true that his visits didn't seem to cost us anything, but he is a sneaky fellow, that Paul, and he fooled us. As sure as anything he must have made money from us some way.'" (II Corinthians 12: 14-16; L.B.)*

Paul was innocent of economic exploitation.

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Beside certain types of exploitation, there are types of discrimination which also can destroy worship in the temple or Church.

C. THERE IS SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION.

¹My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? (James 2: 1-7)

William Booth, founder of the 'Salvation Army' was a minister in the Methodist Church in London for a few years, but he resigned from this Church because he found himself attracted to the outcasts and poor people whom the Methodist leaders did not want Booth to include in his circuit. "He became a free-lance evangelist and in 1865 began meeting in London's East End, where extreme poverty and hardship were the rule for most people." (Dictionary of The Christian Church; pg. 145) Thus began what became known as "The Salvation Army". Booth could not discriminate against the poor and outcasts.

D. THERE IS RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

There are still some churches in the United States where a black man – a Negro – would not feel welcome to attend.

As a Church and as a denomination, let us always be 'free' from social, class, and racial discriminations. May everyone, regardless of color or nationality, feel welcome in our churches!

E. THERE IS DOCTRINAL DISCRIMINATION.

There must be doctrinal integrity and commitment to the basic orthodox beliefs of Christianity, but there must also be freedom of thought and tolerance towards those who believe differently. Total commitment by all to the fundamentals - the basic Christian doctrines – with freedom granted to all in the interpretation of secondary doctrines of Scripture. All who believe that 'Jesus is Lord' should be welcomed to our Church, regardless of differences of interpretation in some of the specific and less important

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doctrinal issues.

Worship is hindered if people are given the impression that they all must believe in the exact way. This does not mean that we are to be 'hazy' in our teaching. We are to have deep convictions and doctrinal distinctives, but we are also to be loving and open and accepting towards those who differ from us in doctrinal interpretation.

II. REALITY IN WORSHIP (Not Irrelevance in Ritualism)

Ritualism without reality was one of the problems which incited the wrath of Jesus. Ritualism is making the aids to worship more important than what the aids to worship were intended to be, until the aids to worship become the substitute for worshipping God Himself.

This happened at this Passover celebration. The animal sacrifices became more important than the worship of God Himself. Proper procedure in offering sacrifices replaced personal worship of God Himself.

The prophets had long shown the irrelevance of animal sacrifices. *"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? Says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats,....Bring no more vain offerings."* (Isaiah 1: 11-17). *"For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices."* (Jeremiah 7: 22). *"With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find him."* (Hosea 5: 6). *"They love sacrifice; they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but the Lord has no delight in them."* (Hosea 8: 13). *"For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased."* (Psalms 51: 16)

Jesus taught that true worship is a thing of the heart, not a performance of certain rituals on certain days in certain places. To the Samaritan woman who wanted to debate with Jesus regarding the proper place to worship (John 4), Jesus replied, *"The time is coming when we will no longer be concerned about whether to worship the Father here or in Jerusalem. For it's not where we worship that counts, but how we worship – is our worship spiritual and real? Do we have the Holy Spirit's help? For God is Spirit, and we must have his help to worship as we should. The Father wants this kind of worship from us."* (John 4: 21-23; Living Bible)

"Is our worship spiritual and real?" That is the important question to answer. Those in the Temple that day had substituted the real worship of God with the rituals and ceremonies and formalities of animal sacrifices. These were not necessary to worship God. It is true that there was a time in Jewish history (when the Mosaic Law was given) when sacrificing animals in prescribed ways (as outlined in the book of Leviticus) was vitally important, but now Jesus is declaring that these animal sacrifices are superfluous and irrelevant. The elaborate system of sacrificing

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animals had obscured the true worship of God from the heart. Form and formality had replaced the warm and spontaneous and personal worship of the heart. An elaborate ritual or a lavish sacrifice can never take the place of the humble and personal worship of the heart. Even the Old Testament prophets taught this. Wrote Micah: *"How can we make up to you for what we've done?" you ask. 'Shall we bow before the Lord with offerings of yearling calves?' Oh, no! For if you offered him thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of olive oil – would that please him? Would He be satisfied? If you sacrificed your oldest child, would that make Him glad? Then would He forgive your sins? Of course not! No, He had told you what He wants, and this is all it is: to be fair and just and merciful, and to walk humbly with your God."* (Micah 6: 6-8; L.B.)

True worship is a thing of the heart, not confined to any one time or place or procedure, and true worship of God always manifests itself in just and right relationships with one's fellowman. To the religiously-oriented, self-righteous Pharisees, Jesus said, *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."* (Matthew 23: 23)

Notes Barclay: *"We are not totally free from this very tendency today. True we will not offer animal sacrifice to God. But we can identify His service with the installation of stained glass windows, the obtaining of a more sonorous organ, the lavishing of money on stone and line and carved wood, while real worship is far away. It is not that these things are to be condemned – far from it. They are often – thank God – the lovely offerings of the loving heart. When they are aids to true devotion they are God-blessed things; but when they are substitutes for true devotion they make God sick at heart."* (John, pg. 113)

True worship is not involved with certain rituals, forms, ceremonies, or procedures. True worship is not man-centered, with a congregation's attention simply fixed on a singer singing or a musician playing, or a preacher speaking. True worship is not preoccupation with the size or beauty of a building. True worship is first a private attitude of the heart, a personal communion with God – with or without a lot of outward and visible emotion.

However, while true worship begins in the heart of the individual worshipper, it does not end there. Individual worship leads to corporate worship. Notes Trueblood, *"Obviously it is possible for individuals to pray alone, and we are commanded by Christ to do so (Matthew 6:6), but the experience of being together is wholly a different one, and equally necessary...it is necessary for people to meet together...If we were angels, this might not be necessary, but we do not happen to be angels. Consequently, we need the strength that comes from one another, as God reaches the entire company. The finest figure of speech which we ever employ to explain the need we have of one another is that of the burning logs or coals. When people gather for genuine worship, said Pennington, 'They are like a heap of fresh*

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and burning coals warming one another, as a great strength, freshness and vigor of life flows into all.' As almost anyone knows, it is hard to have much of a fire with only one log, whereas several rather poor logs may make quite a conflagration." (The People Called Quakers; pgs. 91, 92) Hebrews 10:25 says: *"Let us not neglect our Church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back again is drawing near."* (Living Bible)

III. RENEWAL THROUGH PRAYER (Not Confusion through Distraction)

"The Temple authorities and the Jewish traders were making the Court of the Gentiles into an uproar and a rabble where no man could pray. The lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, the cooing of the doves, the shouts of the hucksters, the rattle of the coins, the voices raised in bargaining disputes – all these combined to make the Court of the Gentiles a place where no man could worship. The conduct in the Temple court shut out the seeking Gentile from the presence of God. It may well be that this was most in Jesus' mind; it may well be that Mark alone preserved the little phrase which means so much: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of robbers."* (Mark 11:17) Jesus was moved to the depths of His heart because seeking men were being shut out from the presence of God." (John's Commentary by Barclay, pgs. 113 and 114)

Asks Barclay, "Is there anything in our Church life – snobbishness, exclusiveness, coldness, a lack of welcome, a tendency to make the congregation into a closed club, arrogance, a fastidiousness – which keeps the seeking stranger out? Let us remember the wrath of Jesus against those who make it difficult and even impossible for the seeking strangers to make contact with God." (John; pg. 114)

What can we do to help make the church a 'House of Prayer'? How can we help create an atmosphere which is conducive for Worship, an inviting place for all, including the newcomer or stranger? Here are a few very practical suggestions:

- 1. Arrange to have infants cared for in the Church Nursery, and small children cared for in the planned "Children's Church".**
- 2. Show friendliness to all, not only during 'moments of friendship', but before and after the service.**
- 3. Welcome the guest and sit near the newcomer to help him feel comfortable and 'at ease'.**
- 4. Come early to service to meditate, pray, and read Scriptures (at least 5 minutes early, and quiet your heart as the organ music is played).**
- 5. Maintain a receptive and teachable mood throughout the service. An expectant and worshipful mood is the mood of faith when God can minister to human need.**
- 6. Sit in a place in the sanctuary that is most conducive for worship, and on a Sunday morning, sit 'as a family' if possible.**
- 7. Participate in every part of worship – the singing, the public prayers, the silent meditations, the giving of tithes and offerings, the careful**

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- listening to the message.
8. Pray for those who lead the services and pray for those worshippers nearest you.

That which I most like to hear when I visit in the homes of those who have recently attended our services is something like this: "I sensed that God was in your Church. I felt a spirit of warm love from all the people in the congregation!"

That which we must covet most and that which we must work most for is a spirit of unity and love and prayer in every one of our services. How can this be accomplished? First, throughout the entire week, be in prayer. Pray alone each day during your designated Quiet Time. Pray with your family during designated Family Worship. Pray throughout the day, silently in your heart, as you carry on your work. This is called Mental Praying. Be an active participant in a Christian Growth Group and learn to enjoy small group praying. Then, come a little early to the sanctuary (about 5 minutes early) and spend some time in Silent Prayer before the service begins. Then, throughout the Public Worship service, breathe a few prayers for those around you.

Your prayers create the spiritual atmosphere for a service. Listen and participate, but as you do, be praying also. Ask God to make you and those around you receptive to new truths, and pray that sinners will be convicted and saved, and believers edified and strengthened.

CONCLUSION

What is true worship? It includes reverence for God, made possible in the atmosphere of love and acceptance. We have noted, as in the case of the money-changers in the Temple, that exploitation and discrimination are always enemies of true worship. There must be no religious or economic exploitation, and there must be no social or racial or doctrinal discrimination! The unity of the faith in the bond of peace must be felt by all – for this is the atmosphere in a Church service which is conducive for true reverence and worship.

Second, reality in worship means that all irrelevant ritualism must be eliminated. We are not saying that all orders of service or rituals or liturgical ceremonies should be eliminated, but we are saying that anything that hinders in the worship of God should be eliminated. In the cleansing of the Temple, Jesus was not only angry because of gross exploitation in the name of religion, but Jesus was angry because the ritual of animal sacrifice had become the substitute for personal worship of God. The aids to worship had taken the place of God. Having an unblemished animal to sacrifice had become more important than having a pure heart in worship. "A liturgy is a means of worshipping God; but an elaborate liturgy can become an end in itself, so that the means and the method of worship end by becoming more important than the worship itself." (Barclay's *The Ten Commandments For Today*; pg. 21)

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Third, real worship means renewal through prayer, not confusion through distraction. It is still true that God's House is not a house of merchandise but a 'house of prayer'. Therefore, quietness, meditation and prayer should still be main ingredients of worship.

The call to true worship comes to us yet. Will we respond to that call? First, let us learn to reverence the Lord. Second, let us seek reality in worship, enjoying meaningful ritual and order, but cleansed from all needless and irrelevant ritual. Let us never allow the aids to worship to take the place of worshipping God Himself. Third, let us do away with needless confusion and distractions in our worship, and learn regularly to experience renewal through prayer, for it is still true that God's House is 'A House of Prayer'. Let's accept God's call to true worship!

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DISCUSSION QUESTION – CHAPTER 5

1. **What is your initial reaction to the picture of Jesus, as He responds with strong anger to the money changers, as recorded in John 2: 12-16?**
2. **Explain the type of exploitation which was taking place in the temple courts that incited Jesus' great anger.**
3. **Share illustrations of the following types of exploitation which exist in our contemporary society, all of which 'victimize' people in the name of religion:**
 - (a) **Religious exploitation**
 - (b) **Economic exploitation**
 - (c) **Social exploitation**
 - (d) **Racial exploitation**
 - (e) **Doctrinal exploitation**
4. **What did the Old Testament prophets declare regarding the irrelevance of mere ritualism which became a substitute for genuine worship? (Note Isaiah 1: 11-17; Jeremiah 7: 22; Hosea 5: 6; Hosea 8: 13; Psalms 51: 16)**
5. **What is the essence of true worship, according to John 4: 21-23?**
6. **How does true worship manifest itself, according to Matthew 23: 23?**
7. **What substitutes do some people today use to replace true devotion to God?**
8. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

"While true worship begins in the heart of the individual worshipper, it does not end there. Individual worship leads to corporate worship. We need the strength that comes from one another, as God reaches the entire company."

Give your explanation of the following statement: "The finest figure of speech which we ever employ to explain the need we have of one another is that of the burning logs or coals."
9. **What can we, as members of the local Church, do to help make the Church a 'House of Prayer'? How can we help create an atmosphere which is conducive for worship, an inviting place for all, including the newcomer or stranger?**
10. **What can you personally do to help create a spirit of unity and love within the public worship services of your local Church?**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT: "I AM THE WAY TO A LIFE OF DYNAMIC FAITH!"

Scripture: *⁴⁶Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. ⁴⁸"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." ⁴⁹The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. ⁵¹While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵²When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." ⁵³Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed. ⁵⁴This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.*

Text: *"Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him to help you do it and He will."
(Psalms 37: 5)*

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever personally been discouraged because you didn't seem to get any definite answers to your intercessory prayer? To help us find a solution to this problem, let us ask the question: "What makes 'prayer' really prayer?"

- (1) A sense of urgent need.
- (2) A sense that only Christ can supply that need.

PREPOSITION

How faith works in relationship to answered prayer is of utmost importance in living and enjoying the Christian life.

- I. "LET US LEARN WELL THE LESSON OF PRAYER"!
- II. Faith makes its' plea and then leaves the how and the when of the answer in GOD'S HAND." (CHARLES ALLEN)
- III. SOMETIMES THE ANSWER TO PRAYER SEEMS TO BE DELAYED.

FAITH MEANS BELIEVING JESUS' WORD BEFORE SEEING ANY VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THE PRAYER IS ANSWERED.
- IV. FAITH MEANS TAKING JESUS AT HIS WORD.

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- V. FAITH MEANS RESTING IN THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD HAS ANSWERED OUR PRAYERS.

CONCLUSION

**Remember these three single words which spell success in getting what is important in life:
(1) Commit, (2) Believe, and (3) Praise.**

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CHAPTER 6

"I AM THE WAY TO A LIFE OF DYNAMIC FAITH!"

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever personally been discouraged because you didn't seem to get any definite answers to your intercessory prayer? To help us find a solution to this problem, let us ask the question: "What makes 'prayer' really prayer?"

- (1) A sense of urgent need.
- (2) A sense that only Christ can supply that need.

There are many with urgent needs – physically, mentally socially, economically, and spiritually – but who think that their needs can be supplied by their own resources!

Take an illustration of physical illness. (This same idea could be applied to other needs also). Seeking a solution to physical illness may take the common form of 'going to the doctor', or 'taking certain medications' (both of which may be God's way indeed of healing). Or 'change of climate' (which again may be God's method of healing), or 'physical exercise' (which again may be God's method of giving health and healing.)

But suppose you find your physical problems not solved through these good methods. What then? One of two things – either despair, or turning directly and urgently to the Great Physician for healing. When one turns to Christ, then what is called prayer is taking place? Intercessory Prayer is being exercised only when two conditions exist: (1) A sense of urgent, definite need; (2) Turning to Christ who only can fully supply that need. One who feels he can supply his own needs in life (the self-sufficient) doesn't really pray. Such a person may repeat pious words and phrases, but he is not really praying. "We pray best when we are most helpless." (Turner) Charles Wesley thus interpreted Jacob's experience of wrestling with an angel (Genesis 32: 25-28)

'Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair;
Speak to my heart, in blessing speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer;
Speak, or thou never hence shall move,
And tell me if thy Name is Love.'
Come, O Thou Traveler'.
(Author unknown)

Paul expressed the same paradox by saying '*when I am weak then am I strong.*' (II Corinthians 12:10)

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PRODUCTION

With a basic understanding of the essence of prayer, let us ask: 'What is the relationship between exercising faith in prayer and receiving an answer to prayer?' How faith works in relationship to answered prayer is of utmost importance in living and enjoying the Christian life.

I. "LET US LEARN WELL THE LESSON OF PRAYER!"

"Faith makes its' plea and then leaves the how and the when of the answer in God's Hand."(Touch of the Master's Hand; Allen; pg. 24)

**"The healing of the seamless robe
Is by our beds of pain –
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."
(Turner; pg. 123)**

It is Christ's desire to make us whole – in mind, body, and spirit. The power is found in Christ. By touching Him we are made whole.

Healing is far more healing of the spirit than of the body. It is always God's will to heal us of fears, resentments, self-preoccupation, guilt, impurities, inferiorities, jealousies, and emptiness. When these sicknesses of the soul are healed, then many sicknesses of the body are automatically sealed, for many, if not most physical illnesses, have a deep-rooted cause in the spirit and mind. We can be ABSOLUTE in claiming God's healing for some types of sicknesses – those of the spirit.

However, we cannot be absolutists in regards to physical healing. Says E. Stanley Jones: "By absolutist I mean those who take the position that all diseases must be cured in this life or else there is sin or lack of faith. This leaves a lot of wreckage behind among people who are not healed by prayer or medicine or surgery. We explain that this is a mortal world and we are not supposed to be immortal in a mortal world: the body breaks down sometime, so that death is a part of life. Some diseases must await the final cure in the resurrection when we get our immortal bodies. So God will heal us now or give us power to use the infirmity – not bear it but use it – until the final cure when we get the immortal body...This position in regard to physical healing, namely, that God will heal the infirmity now or give us power to use the infirmity until the final cure when we get our immortal body, does not leave wreckage behind. It means cure now or power to use the infirmity. But if you insist on an absolutist position, you do leave spiritual wreckage behind...Amy Wilson Carmichael in India was a saint, but for the last eighteen years of her life she suffered dreadfully from arthritis. Did she have sin or lack of faith in her life? No, she did what we suggested – she used her infirmity. She wrote her great books while on a bed of pain. She said: 'I'm in Nero's prison, but I'm not Nero's prisoner.'" (A Song of Ascents; pgs. 228-229)

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II. SOMETIMES THE ANSWER TO PRAYER SEEMS TO BE DELAYED.

Faith means believing Jesus' word before seeing any visible evidence that the prayer is answered.

"Then Jesus told him, 'Go back home. Your son is healed!' And the man believed Jesus and started home. While he was on his way, some of his servants met him with the Jews that all was well – his son had recovered." (John 4: 50, 51) It was 'while he was on his way' that the answer came. God sometimes answers immediately. However, time, as well as trust, is usually an element in the answer to a prayer.

"Let us look at an analogy, a parable in nature that teaches exactly the same lesson. A small boy who had been born and brought up in a large city asked his parents for permission to plant some Indian corn in their little garden, and was given a few seed corn. He recalls the wonder and responsibility when he planted that corn. He committed it to the ground and buried it out of sight. He watered it, and although he hardly expected it to come up the first day or two he could not resist the temptation of digging up each grain and seeing how it was getting on. Needless to say he raised no corn from that planting. He had to begin all over and put in some new seed; and after a long while gathered the little harvest of corn...There are some requests which we commit to God that we treat exactly as he did those grains of corn. We commit them to Him and water them with our prayers and tears, but we are too impatient. It is hard to wait. We dig them up and take them in our hands to see how they are getting on. This blocks the working of God. Never dig up in unbelief what you have sown in faith. There is too much self-effort and too little real committing to God. Some prayers have to be hidden in God's hand till they die, and God wants us to leave them there by faith, for God knows that 'if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'" (The Prayer of Committal, pg. 5)

Commitment of the request to God and permitting God time to bring a harvest is essentials in getting an answer to prayer. There comes a time when you are to "Release the whole prayer from your conscious thinking. If the prayer is real and has hold of you, it will be at work in the subconscious mind – there will be an undertone of prayer in all you do. But it should be released from the conscious mind lest it become an anxiety center and make you tense and wrought up. The very releasing of it from the conscious mind is an act of FAITH in God. You relax and trust God to do the right thing in the matter." (Abundant Living; pg. 231)

III. FAITH MEANS TAKING JESUS AT HIS WORD.

The Nobleman took Jesus at His word. "The man believed Jesus and started home." (vs. 50) Jesus says what He means and means what He says. Jesus' character and word are trustworthy. You can take Jesus at His word.

"The story is told that while Napoleon was reviewing his troops he lost control of his horse. A private soldier stepped from the ranks and secured the steed. The

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Emperor, greatly pleased, said, 'Much obliged to you, captain.' The soldier, quick to notice the word 'captain', said 'Which regiment, sire?' Napoleon replied as he rode away, 'of my guards'. The soldier left his musket and walked to the officers' quarters and announced that he was now a captain of the guards. Incensed at this apparent presumption, the chief officer demanded to know on whose authority he made his claim. Pointing towards the Emperor the soldier replied confidently, 'He said it, sir!' He took the Emperor at his word." (Turner; pg. 124)

IV. FAITH MEANS RESTING IN THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD HAS ANSWERED OUR PRAYERS.

As Allan said, "The faith to pray is only half enough. We must also have the faith to believe the answer has been given. In 'Grace Abounding', John Bunyan confesses that one abomination of his own heart is that he has not watched for the answers to his prayers." (Allan, pg. 26)

The Nobleman returned home, fully expecting that he would see his boy well and strong. This is the rest of Faith – knowing that one's prayer is answered before seeing the visible evidence, and watching with anticipation for the visible evidence to come at God's own time and way.

The Bible says, "*Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.*" (Psalms 37: 5) This simply means: "Commit, trust, and He worketh." As one said: "To commit anything fully to God, it is necessary to have a definite transaction with God." This is what the Nobleman had: A definite transaction with God. He committed a great need to Christ, trusted Christ to supply that need, and anticipated the visible evidence of God's working. The answer came, and came at the very moment he committed his great need to Christ – although it was the next day before he actually personally witnessed the answer visibly.

"He asked them when the lad had begun to feel better. And they replied, 'Yesterday afternoon at about one o'clock his fever suddenly disappeared!' Then the father realized it was the same moment that Jesus had told him, 'Your soul is healed.' And the officer and his entire household believed that Jesus was the Messiah." (vs. 52,54)

This Nobleman was definite in making his request known to Christ, and he was just as definite in believing what Christ said about the answer. He calmly returned home. "In fact, so convinced was he that his prayer was answered that he became relaxed and at ease. He did not rush back home that night. There was no need for that. He knew so well that everything would be all right that he went and found a bed and rested." (Allen; 26)

Think of this statement: "After praying and believing, if the answer still carries outwardly, do not continue to pray for it in such a way that it is evident you are not believing Him for it...If God keeps you waiting for the conscious answer, tell Him that you are waiting and are still believing and praising Him for the

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answer...Remind Him of His Word of Promise and maintain your stand of faith and say: 'Lord, I believe thee and praise thee.'"

"There is nothing that so fully clinches faith as to be so sure of the answer that you can thank and praise God for it."

But one may reply: "This sounds easy. But this method presupposes that I have really believed. How can I know that I have really believed? We know we have believed the Lord because after we pray we are not restlessly planning and working for the answer to our prayer but are filled with restful praise (because we have believed God's word that He 'worketh')."

When we feel this initial rest after praying for an urgent need (an evidence of true belief), I then begin calling the things we have prayed for OURS and thank God for them before we feel or see the answer. "You must believe it is God's will to answer this particular prayer. If you so believe Him, you can begin to thank Him. If you can honestly thank God from your heart that He has heard you, you can be sure that your faith is sufficiently perfect for Him to work. Then you can say, "Lord I believe Thee and praise Thee.'" (Ibid; 6)

From then on (until the visible answer comes), "we are not to be occupied with our feelings or symptoms or our faith, or lack of faith, but only with what God has said." This Nobleman was preoccupied with only one thing – Jesus' Promise. "*Go back home. Your son is healed.*" His focus of attention was on the Promise, not on his feelings, or his faith or lack of faith, not on his recurring doubts which could have come before seeing the answer to his prayer.

After God has initially given us assurance that our prayer will be answered, then continue to praise and thank Him for the answer, even though we have not seen the answer yet. Remember, faith means resting in the assurance that God has answered our prayers, regardless of the outward appearance. "The simple way is to begin calling the things we have prayed for ours and to thank God for them before we feel or see the answer."

Learn to say: "Lord, I still believe thee and praise thee." This is the prayer of Committal.

CONCLUSION

Conditions for Answered Prayer:

- (1) **REALLY PRAY** – Don't just say pious phrases: Really praying means:
 - (a) Having a sense of definite need.
 - (b) Realizing that God only can supply that need.

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- (2) Pray until we believe – that is, until God gives a sense of assurance and rest to our hearts. This is what the old saints used to mean when they would say: ‘I’ve prayed through’.
- (3) Continue to believe and praise God for the answer until the answer becomes visible. This means keeping our focus on God’s promise and giving no sympathy to recurring feelings of doubt or despair. Say until the answer comes: “Lord I believe Thee and Praise thee.” Really hand over the requests to God and give God a chance to work out the visible answer in His own time and way. “Every moment of this waiting is a moment of His working.”
- (4) Remember, the purpose of prayer is not only the answer to the prayer, but also the development of the character of the person who prays. God wants to use the very process of prayer to develop faith in the Pray – er. Therefore, “if the realization of what we have believed for always came immediately, where would faith have any chance to grow and be perfected?”
- (5) Rejoice when the visible answer comes – and share faith’s power with others. Build each new prayer adventure upon the strong foundation of past prayer answers. Call to remembrance God’s past acts of power to inspire you to claim victory for the present and the future.

Remember these three single words which spell success in getting what is important in life:

(1) COMMIT, (2) BELIEVE, AND (3) PRAISE

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 6

1. **Have you ever personally been discouraged because you didn't seem to get any definite answers to your prayers? If so, how have you reacted when you saw no visible evidence of a positive answer to your prayers? With resentment towards God? With feelings of despair and discouragement and doubt? With a decision no longer to pray? With a renewed determination to 'pray harder'? With a sincere investigation into the personal or theological 'causes' for the unanswered prayer? Other responses? (Read James 4:3; 5: 13-18)**
2. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Intercessory prayer is being exercised only when two conditions exist: (a) A sense of urgent, definite need; (b) Turning to Christ who only can fully supply that need."**
3. **Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: "Faith makes its plea and then leaves the HOW and the WHEN of the answer in God's hand."**

Do you believe there is a tendency, in the lives of some earnest Christians, to 'demand' from God an answer to prayer, at a 'certain time' and in a 'certain manner'?
4. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: Many, if not most, physical illnesses, have a deep-rooted cause in one's mind or emotions or inner spirit."**
5. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "As believers, we can be ABSOLUTE in claiming God's healing for some types of sicknesses, namely spiritual sicknesses; however, as believers, we cannot be ABSOLUTISTS in regards to physical healing."**
6. **How would you answer a person – a sincere believer – who takes the position that all diseases must be cured in this earthly life or else there is sin or a lack of faith?**
7. **If God, in His sovereign will, chooses not to physically heal one who sincerely prays for such healing, how should the suffering believer respond?**
8. **Illustrate from your own life, or from your observation of another, the truthfulness of the following statement: "Faith means believing Jesus' word before seeing any visible evidence that the prayer is answered." (Note John 4: 50, 51)**
9. **Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "God sometimes answers prayer immediately. However, time, as well as trust, is usually an element in the answer to a prayer."**

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10. Give your interpretation to the following statements: "There is too much self-effort and too little real committing to God. Some prayers have to be hidden in God's hand till they die, and God wants us to leave them there by faith, for God knows that 'if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'"
11. Why is it true to say that the releasing of an earnest prayer from the conscious mind is an 'act of faith in God'?
12. Illustrate, from a study of John 4: 46-54, the truthfulness of the following statement: "Faith means taking Jesus at His Word."
13. Do you ever identify, as a believer, with John Bunyan's confession that one abomination of his own heart is that he has not watched for the answers to his prayers? Is failure to watch for such answers to prayer an evidence of a lack of faith on the part of a believer? What is the difference between "exercising faith" and "manifesting presumption", as these two attitudes relate to "making requests of God"?
14. Tell of a personal time in your life when you experienced the "Rest of Faith" (the latter phrase being defined as follows: "The 'rest of faith' is knowing that one's prayer is answered before seeing the visible evidence, and watching with anticipation for the visible evidence to come at God's own time and way.")
15. Give your response to the following statement by Bill Bright: "Prayer is really the place where people are won to Christ; service is just gathering in the results of our prayers."
16. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "If God keeps you waiting for the conscious answer to a prayer, tell Him that you are waiting and are still believing and praising Him for the answer. Remind Him of His Word of Promise and maintain your stand of faith and say: 'Lord, I believe thee and praise thee.'"
17. In seeing an answer to a prayer, what is "God's part" and what is "Man's part"? Is perseverance an important condition for answered prayer? (Note Matthew 7: 7) Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We know we have believed the Lord because after we pray we are not restlessly planning and working for the answer to our prayer but are filled with restful praise (because we have believed God's word that He 'worketh')." (Read Psalms 37: 5)
18. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "The purpose of prayer is not only the answer to the prayer, but also the development of the character of the person who prays."
19. Why it is important to build each new prayer adventure upon the strong foundation of past prayer answers? Have you developed the 'holy habit' of keeping a 'daily

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prayer journal' (diary)? If so, share with other believers the benefits you have derived from such a practice.

20. In terms of experiencing spiritual reality, share how the following three words spell 'success' in life: (a) Commit, (b) Believe, (c) Praise.

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 7

"I AM THE WAY TO HEALTH AND HAPPINESS!"

Scripture: *"¹Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews.²Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda^{la} and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.³Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.^{lb}⁵One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"⁷"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."⁸Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."⁹At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."¹¹But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"¹²So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"¹³The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.¹⁴Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. (John 5: 1-15)*

Text: *"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." (John 15: 8)*

INTRODUCTION

Do you want to be healthy and happy? This essentially is the question that Jesus asked the paralyzed man near the pool.

PRODUCTION

If Jesus asks you, "Wilt thou be made whole?", this implies the very possibility of health and happiness. What are the steps to healing and wholeness?

- I. MUST REALLY WANT DELIVERANCE "Wilt thou be made whole?" – (vs. 6) (Desire).
 - A. PHYSICAL ILLNESS?
 - B. SOME HABIT?
- II. MUST ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF WHAT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE – "Rise!" (vs. 8) (Obedience).
- III. MUST ELIMINATE THE TEMPTATION TO FALL BACK INTO YOUR OLD WAY – "Take up your bed" – (v.8) (Cautious Maintenance).

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- A. TAKE A PHYSICAL PROBLEM.
- B. TAKE OVER-EATING.
- C. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF ALCOHOLISM.
- D. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF TOBACCO.
- E. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF RESENTMENTS.
- F. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF STEWARDSHIP.

IV. MUST BEGIN SOME ACTIVITY – “Walk” (vs. 8) (Involvement).

V. MUST GUARD AGAINST RELAPSE INTO SIN - Must guard against relapse into Sin – “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” – (vs. 14) (Continuing Fidelity).

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the self-righteous and inhuman Jewish leaders, Jesus was a man of compassion – the Healer of men’s bodies and the Saviour of men’s souls! He came to impart health and wholeness and happiness. Man’s plea and Christ’s power results in man’s wholeness!

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CHAPTER 7

"I AM THE WAY TO HEALTH AND HAPPINESS!"

INTRODUCTION

Do you want to be healthy and happy? This essentially is the question that Jesus asked the paralyzed man near the pool. "In the question of Christ's is implied the possibility of a cure. To have asked the man if he wanted to get well when there was no hope for him would have been cruelty. Clovis Chappel says it would be like saying to a hungry man at your door 'Would you like a good dinner?' and then slamming the door in his face or saying to a drowning man 'Would you like to be saved?' and then leaving him in the water." (The Touch of the Master's Hand; Allen; pg. 46)

PRODUCTION:

Are you unhealthy or unhappy? If Jesus asks you, "Wilt thou be made whole?", this implies the very possibility of health and happiness. Perhaps He is asking you the same question that He asked the paralyzed man. If so, then what are the steps to healing and wholeness and health and happiness? (1) Must really want deliverance ("*Wilt thou be made whole?*"); (2) Must accept the Challenge of what seems our impossibilities ("*Rise!*"); (3) Must eliminate temptation to fall back into your old way ("*Take up your bed*"); (4) Must Begin some activity ("*Walk*"). (5) Must Guard against relapsing into former sin ("*Stop Sinning lest a worse thing happen to you*"). These points are from Allen; pgs. 45-48

I. MUST REALLY WANT DELIVERANCE "Wilt thou be made whole?" – (vs. 6) (Desire).

A. PHYSICAL ILLNESS?

Some use physical illness as an escape from reality. Such don't really want healed. "Leslie Weatherhead tells of a woman who was informed by her doctor that she had an incurable cancer. But later it was discovered she did not have cancer at all. She refused to leave the hospital and was more upset by being told that she was well than that she was dying. She said, 'I cannot bear the thought of facing life again.'" (Ibid; pg. 45)

What do you want deliverance from?

B. SOME HABIT?

If you love the pleasureable benefits of the habit more than you hate the ultimate destructive aspects of the habit, then you do not really want deliverance.

There are many habits which God will enable us to be delivered from, if we

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really want deliverance. A minister struggled for years with overweight. Losing over a hundred pounds finally, he wrote a book entitled, "Fat Is In Your Head".

As one Christian author said, - "We must eat just enough to keep us fit, and a little less than will keep us fat. Rubber tires around our waistlines are not life-savers, but life drags. Why carry around excess baggage, overburdening the heart?"

What about tobacco? Is smoking consistent with a disciplined Christian life? The pleasurable benefits from smoking are so great for some people that they do not really want deliverance from this unnatural desire. For decades now the harmful affects of smoking have been recognized, but it was not until the United States Surgeon General's published reports in 1964 that the strong reaction against tobacco set in. So harmful are the proven affects, that no tobacco advertisement is even permitted on T.V., and notice of the harmful affects of tobacco advertisement are on the packs of cigarettes. But listen to what was said about tobacco clear back in 1941, by Gene Tunney, the ex-heavyweight champion. His article which was printed in a 1941 Reader's Digest was rather stinging, even before all the further modern-day research appeared. Read what he wrote to thousands in his day, many years ago:

"No one has ever denied that nicotine is poison. Taken clear, it is as quick-acting and fatal as prussic acid. A drop of it on a shaved rabbit causes immediate convulsions and death. The nicotine dissolved out of a few cigarettes and placed on the tongue of a grown man would kill him in 15 minutes. Luckily the bulk of the nicotine in tobacco is volatilized in smoke; you do not get the poison straight. But if you smoke a pack a day, you inhale 400 milligrams of it a week. That much in a single dose would kill you as quickly as a bullet...

"Under the flogging of the nicotine whip, the body burns up sugar faster; heart action, respiration and blood pressure are kept at a ding-dong pitch. At the end of a two-pack day, the smoker's system has received an unmerciful beating. Impoverished nerves and body cells cry out with fatigue and irritation. The chain-smoker suffers from a chronic 'tired feeling'. He is energy bankrupt and must borrow new energy at the outrageous interest rate of still heavier smoking." (Reader's Digest; 1941; Dec. quoted in Abundant Living; pg. 137)

I would much prefer to skip any mention of tobacco, for many Christians smoke. Their sincerity and piety cannot be questioned. Let it be understood: Condemning a habit is not condemning the person who has the habit. Let it be remembered though: "The future of the world is in the hands of disciplined people." (E.S. Jones; pg. 138)

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The key to deliverance is self-surrender. The man beside the pool surrendered himself to Christ – totally. Surrender the self totally to Christ, first, and then the bad habits of the self will be broken.

The first step is to deliverance, then really desiring deliverance. If you don't desire deliverance from an obviously harmful bondage in your life, then pray something like this: "Lord and Master, wilt thou master my desires, and let my desires for the unnatural and unholy be destroyed, with a consequent resurrection of new and holy desires". God is able to give us a new heart and new desires.

Desire for deliverance comes before the deliverance itself. Are you bowed beneath a heavy load? Are you lying on the bed of physical pain, or on the bed of a bad habit, or on the bed of an uncontrollable anger, or on the bed of divided loyalties, or on the bed of self-centeredness, or on the bed of worry, or on the bed of unresolved guilt or resentment, or on the bed of undisciplined desires.

What is your infirmity? Do you desire deliverance? "When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, He said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?' Or (as King James puts it): 'Wilt thou be made whole?'"

Wholeness, health, happiness, holiness – this is the goal of God for every one of us, but we must be willing to receive before God can give.

Says God, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." (Jeremiah 33: 3) "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29: 13)

This man at the pool wanted healing – and wanted it with all his heart.

II. MUST ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF WHAT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE – "Rise!" (vs. 8) (Obedience).

Jesus told the paralyzed man to rise! That seemed to be the hardest command to obey – for that was this man's greatest weakness! But healing comes in this way oftentimes. Obedience leads to victory! "And amazing it is what we can do in His power. In the presence of Christ the man actually did rise." (Allen; pg. 46)

Christ may challenge us to do what seems to us impossible, or at least hard. **DESIRE** is the first step to wholeness, health, and healing. **OBEDIENCE** is the second step to health. If we obey Christ's command, however hard it may at first seem, we will receive amazing strength and our impossibilities will become exciting realities.

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Let's take other simple illustrations of how this principle of healing and health works. Take what was first mentioned in the message – overeating. Our desire for deliverance is tested by the command of Jesus: *"Rise!"* In other words, do that which seems impossible. What seems impossible when it comes to overeating? To get up from the dinner table when still a little hungry; or giving up favorite desserts; or going on a low calorie diet. When one obeys the hard command, he finds a new and amazing power given to him.

Or take smoking. What seems impossible regarding smoking, quitting 'cold turkey'? But obedience leads to victory! "Don't try to give up unnatural habits by reducing them little by little – let them go all at once, bag and baggage. The tapering off method seldom works." (E.S. Jones; pg. 140)

Take another example of applying this principle. Take the person who desires to obey Jesus' command to Fast (to go without one or two meals to pray instead of to eat). Spiritual health comes from fasting. How to win the victory over the hunger pangs? Simply obedience, that is based on a supreme desire for spiritual health that overrides the physical challenges and obstacles. Amazing victory comes through such discipline (if, of course, such fasting is done for the glory of God.)

Take the person who is troubled with bitterness or resentment. He wants emotional health restored, and he desires to enjoy again the blessedness of a clear conscience. Desire is the first step to emotional healing. The second step is obedience. Said Jesus to the impotent *"Rise!"* How does this apply to resentment? Applied to resentment it means one will seek reconciliation through confession to the offended, and hearty and honest restitution. If you are the innocent one, it will mean seeking out the offending one on the phone and expressing a desire to enter into a close and friendly relationship. At times it may mean waiting quietly and letting God work in His own gracious way. This may seem hard, but divine power is given to the obedient soul.

Take another example. There is the pastor or layman who desires to reach out to others in visitation and witnessing, but he is fearful. What is the answer to this problem? First, maintaining desire and a vision of witnessing and visiting. I know about this fear as many others do too. Sincere Christians they are, but they still have this fear. A minister friend of mine wanted to call on an unsaved family that had visited his Church, but his fear was so great that he circled the block two or three times before he finally stopped the car and went to the door and rang the door bell. Needless to say, the family he visited was warm and he realized his fears were unfounded and needless.

How happy he was to gain victory over his impotence in this area of his life. How did he win the victory that night? He had the desire to visit, combined with a fear to visit, but he obeyed the command of Jesus: *"Rise!"* (In other words, he did the very thing that was most difficult for him to do – he went and rang the doorbell). When he obeyed, he found a wonderful new strength given to him.

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The Lord wants us to face our fears head-on. Speak something like this to the thing you are afraid of: "Fear, bend over! I thought so; I see the footprint of the Son of God on your neck! You were defeated at the Cross! So leave, in the name of the living Lord!"

What about learning to pray? There are those who find great difficulty in praying out loud, for instance. They wish they could but they are afraid. But victory is won when such a person obeys Jesus' command: "*Rise.*" (In other words, praying out loud for the first time, or getting up early to pray . (Set your clock to get up earlier).

Someone has said, "In tackling any problem, raise it in its most difficult phase, solve it there, and then you solve it all down the line." One Christian counselor applies this principle. Says he, "I have made it a practice to pick out the worst-looking letter in the pile and open it first."

The first step to health and healing – whether it is physical, emotional, social, or spiritual healing – is DESIRE. "*Wilt thou be made whole?* (vs. 6)

The second step to health and healing is OBEDIENCE. "*Rise!*" (vs. 8) That is, doing the seeming impossible or difficult thing and finding that in doing it, there is great new strength and power given to you by the Master. When the man at the pool obeyed, he was given strength to walk. So will we.

Allow me to share just one more illustration of this principle – in the area of tithing. One whose income is not adjusted to giving one-tenth to God's Work, may feel that tithing is impossible. How can one be restored to spiritual health? Many times through the exercise of tithing. Desire is the first step. Do you really want to tithe? "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" (vs. 6) Obedience is the second step. "*Rise!*" That is, do the thing that seems impossible! Put God to the test! Express your desire in a tangible way! Simply Rise! Be delivered from your impotence in the area of stewardship. Start tithing even if it seems hard or impossible! When you obey, you will find, like the impotent man at the Pool, a new strength. You too can start walking. I have known and heard of many who found a new health and happiness in stewardship responsibility, because they started to obey. It seemed difficult to start, but when they obeyed they found that God blessed them and seemed to multiply their money. God is in debt to no man. A person can never out give God. God will more than make it up to you. He will stretch the nine-tenths to do more than the ten-tenths did before you started tithing.

III. MUST ELIMINATE THE TEMPTATION TO FALL BACK INTO YOUR OLD WAY – "Take up your bed" – (vs. 8) (Cautious Maintenance).

Let's see specifically how this third step to health and healing would be applied to several of the areas which we have mentioned earlier.

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A. TAKE A PHYSICAL PROBLEM.

To eliminate the temptation to fall back into a previous sickness, following healing, one must maintain proper exercises. One must not presume upon God's mercy. Jesus said, *"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."* For instance, suppose one has been cured of diabetes. Such a person should not presume upon God's mercy by deliberately consuming large doses of sweets just to test his healing. Proper health rules should be respected, and former weaknesses should be respected. There is such a thing, remember, as qualified healing – that is, healing as long as health laws are obeyed and common sense is applied.

B. TAKE OVER-EATING.

To eliminate the temptation to fall back into your old way, don't sit around a table and flirt with all the good food that needs yet to be consumed, and fancy yourself consuming it.

C. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF ALCOHOLISM.

"There is an old story of a man who had been the victim of strong drink but had reformed and apparently was the conqueror of his evil habit. However, when he drove into town, he continued to hitch his horse at the post in front of the town saloon. Eventually he fell into his old ways again. Had he had a healthy fear of temptation he would have changed his hitching post." (Prayer That Really Works; pg. 30)

D. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF TOBACCO.

"Take up your bed." That is, don't leave cigarettes deliberately in a dresser drawer, an easily accessible place to return to the old habit, if necessary. Put the old habit completely out of reach – hard to get to. Cultivate positive attitudes. As one said, "When you stand in the strength of Christ, don't think about the possibility of falling. We remember how Peter walked on the water as long as he kept looking at Christ. When he began to look at the winds and waves, he began to sink. (Allen; pg. 48)

E. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF RESENTMENTS.

After you have risen and have done what you should to become healed - that is, made proper restitution and confession (or committed the offensive person to God), then eliminate the temptation of recalling past injuries or mentally taking out vengeance upon the person. Rather, "Go each day to do some positive good to the person against whom you hold or have held resentments." (E.S. Jones; Abundant Living; pg. 63)

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F. TAKE THE PROBLEM OF STEWARDSHIP.

When you have "Risen!" that is, started tithing, then gear down your standard of living to make it easy to tithe. Cut out luxuries if necessary. Above all, don't make it difficult to continue to tithe when you have begun to obey by tithing. (Ill. Of Bob and Hyrt cutting in two all their credit cards)

My wife's sister and her husband (many years ago) decided that they would eliminate all of their credit cards, to eliminate the temptation to spend more money than they should (although they were making plenty of money, and they had tithed for a long time)!

IV. MUST BEGIN SOME ACTIVITY - "Walk" (vs. 8) (Involvement).

Says one leading authority, "The greatest physical therapy is creative work." We are made by the Creator for creation. When we cease to create, we degenerate; when we don't create, others cremate. So don't retire; change your occupation. And don't ask to be released from responsibility. To assume responsibility is to match you against a task. This rubbing of responsibility upon you is burnishing powder to give brightness to your mind, your soul, your body. Without it you get dull. Be absorbed in helping other people." (A Song of Ascents; pg. 338)

Self-preoccupation is the main cause of mental illness. (Illustration Of Jones' experience of visiting in a mental hospital, trying to get patients to make clothes and bandages for missionary work in India, and couldn't find any volunteers. Self-preoccupation was their main problem).

Involvement in work, hobbies, and most of all with people is the best therapy possible. In fact, God often heals through INVOLVEMENT. "There was Glen Cunningham, badly burned, but who nonetheless became the fastest runner of his generation. Determination, work, and involvement, in the practice of running did the trick." (Alive to God Through Prayer; pg. 102)

How healing are the words of Jesus : "*Go work in my Vineyard!*" The therapy of work! Reward for work well done in the Vineyard for the Lord, is More Work to Do. How eternally exciting, having our days literally filled with redemptive, loving activity! Work as Response to God's grace, not as attempt to earn God's favor.

There is a popular book written by a housewife, telling of the opportunities of service of women today, entitled: "Caught With My Hands Full." We should keep our hands and brains full of activity for our Lord and our fellowmen. Idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Says Pastor Charles Allen, pastor of a large Methodist Church: "Begin some activity. I think the most redeeming institution on the face of this earth is the

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Church...Yet the Church has many critics. Some of the critics are outside the Church. They do not worry me because I just stay away from those. The ones I do worry about are those whose names are on the roll but it means nothing to them. Like the man at the pool, they complain that nobody will help them. They complain, 'The preacher never comes to see me – I go, but nobody shakes hands with me – the church is after my money – I don't like the music – too many members of the Church are hypocrites –' and so forth.

"But I have noticed that when the complaining fellow begins to walk on his own within the Church – to support the Church with his prayers, his presence, his gifts, and his service – he finds joy and strength therein. One is 'made whole' only when he begins some worthwhile activity. The sickest people are usually those who have the least to do." (The Touch of the Master's Hand; pg. 48)

'Walking' means beginning some activity. Get involved in God's Work, and start being the self you are meant to be – the creative self. Creating for God and for others is a health-giving thing. God has made us for creative involvement – work. (No place for Boredom in the work of God).

V. MUST GUARD AGAINST RELAPSE INTO SIN — "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you" – (vs. 14) (Continuing Fidelity).

"Jesus said to the man by the pool: 'Wouldst thou be made whole?' Some people want to be well, but not 'whole' – whole as a total person. That is impossible. The new birth is a new birth to health. Jesus, seeing the paralytic, said: "your sins are forgiven you.' He was paralyzed by guilt, and the physical paralysis was an outer manifestation of that spiritual paralysis. So Jesus could not make him well until he had made him whole by forgiveness of sins. Then the greatest medicine for health is conversion." (A Song of Ascents; pg. 338)

In order to maintain mental and physical and spiritual health, we must guard against relapsing into our old sins. To sin is not only to adversely affect one's personal relationship with God spiritually, but to sin is also to bring other negative consequences into one's life, consequences that can rob one even of physical health. "The man's eight-and-thirty years of illness had apparently been brought on by dissipation. It was a sin of flesh, avenged in the flesh, that had given him that miserable life...There is always danger that we shall fall back into old sins, even if we think we have overcome them...And such a fall is not only more criminal than the former, it is more deadly than the former. 'It was better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn aside.' 'The last state of that man is worse than the first.'

"My brother, there is no blacker condemnation: and if I may use a strong word, there is no hotter hell, then that which belongs to an apostate Christian. 'It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his vomit again.' Very impolite a very coarse metaphor? Yes, to express a far worse reality.

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“Christian men and women you have been made whole. ‘Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.’ And turn to that Lord and say, ‘Hold Thou me up and I shall be saved.’ Then the enemies will not be able to recapture you, and the chains which have dropped from your wrists will never enclose them any more.” (Exposition of Holy Scripture; Maclaren; vol. 10; pgs. 244, 245)

CONCLUSION

- 1. Do you really want deliverance? “Wit thou be made whole?” – DESIRE.**
- 2. Are you willing to accept the challenge of what seems to be impossible for you? “Rise” – OBEDIENCE.**
- 3. Will you eliminate the temptation to fall back into your old ways? “Take up your bed.” – CAUTIOUS MAINTENANCE.**
- 4. Will you begin creatively to be involved in work for the Lord? “Walk” – CREATIVE INVOLVEMENT.**
- 5. Will you guard yourself against relapsing into sin? “Stop Sinning or something worse may happen to you” – CONTINUING FIDELITY.**

“The inhumanity of the so-called best people of Jesus’ day stirred Him to pity and fiery-eyed indignation. The lad was full of religion, but it lacked the milk of human kindness. The scribes and Pharisees had their eyes glued on institutions, books, ceremonies. They had lost interest in man. To them the Sabbath was more than a human being, the temple was more than a human body, a sacrifice was more than the good-will of a brother man, and a contribution to the temple was more than filial devotion to one’s parents. The good people of Jesus’ day were punctilious in regard to ablutions and fasting, and prayers, but they had lost the heart that pities.” (20 Centuries of Great Preaching; pg. 79; vol. 7)

In contrast to the self-righteous and inhuman Jewish leaders, Jesus was a man of compassion – the Healer of men’s bodies and the Saviour of men’s souls! He came to impart health and wholeness and happiness. Man’s plea and Christ’s power results in man’s wholeness!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 7

1. Why would Jesus ask a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years, *“Wilt thou be made whole?”*? As incredible as it may seem, do you believe that there are ‘handicapped people’ who really do not wish to be healed? That there are people who have ‘bad habits’ from which they really do not want deliverance? Is it possible to be delivered from a ‘bad habit’ or to be ‘physically healed of a disease’, without the expression of a deep desire to be healed or delivered?

(Note: If you don’t desire deliverance from an obviously harmful bondage in your life, here is a prayer worth praying: “Lord and Master, wilt Thou master my desires, and let my desires for the unnatural and unholy be destroyed, with a consequent resurrection of new and holy desires”)

2. If Desire is the first step to wholeness and health, what is the second step? (Note John 5: 8)?
3. From your own personal experience, illustrate the truth of the following statements: “If we obey Christ’s command – to ‘RISE’ - , however hard it may at first seem, we will receive amazing strength and our impossibilities will become exciting realities.”

Illustrate how this principle – the principle of ‘Rising’ – could be realized in each of the following difficult areas of life:

- (a) Losing weight because of an overweight problem that endangers your health.
 - (b) Giving up ‘smoking’ or ‘drinking’ alcohol.
 - (c) Giving up bitterness or resentment in a human relationship.
 - (d) Overcoming fear in witnessing to non-believers.
 - (e) Learning, as a shy Christian, to pray out loud amidst a group of believers in public.
 - (f) Learning to tithe (giving 10% of your income) before paying any other bills.
4. Give your interpretation of the following statements: “In tackling any problem, raise it in its most difficult phrase, solve it there, and then you solve it all down the line.”

(Note: The Lord wants us to face our fears and difficulties (‘handicaps’ and harmful habits and hurtful attitudes) aggressively and confidently and ‘head-on’. Speak something like this to the thing you are afraid of: “Fear (Problem), bend over! I thought so: I see the footprint of the Son of God on your neck! You were defeated at the Cross! So leave, in the name of the Living Lord!”

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5. How can a believer “take up his bed” (John 5: 8) – i.e., eliminate the temptation to fall back into his old way of life – in the following ‘problem areas’:
 - (a) Physical problem of overweight.
 - (b) Physical and psychological problem of smoking or alcohol.
 - (c) Spiritual and relational problem of resentments.
 - (d) Problem of poor financial stewardship and patterns of impulsive buying.
6. Why is involvement in creative work and in others-oriented ‘love projects’, so important as a means of finding and maintaining mental and physical health? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Self-preoccupation is the main cause of mental illness.”
7. Illustrate from your own life or from your observation of others, the truthfulness of the following statement: “One is ‘made whole’ only when he begins some worthwhile activity. The sickest people are usually those who have the least to do.”
8. Is it possible for a person to be truly ‘well’ physically if he is not ‘whole’ spiritually? Why or why not? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The greatest medicine for health is conversion.”
9. Tell what you think Jesus meant by the following warning which was given to the man who was healed by Jesus: “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.”
10. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: “To sin is not only to adversely affect one’s personal relationship with God spiritually, but to sin is also to bring other negative consequences into one’s life, consequences that can rob one even of physical health.”
11. Give your personal response and interpretation of the following statement: “There is always danger that we shall fall back into old sins, even if we think we have overcome them...And such a fall is not only more criminal than the former, it is more deadly than the former.” (Read 2 Peter 2: 20-22)
12. In the privacy of your own heart and mind, think of some problem area of your life (a wrong attitude or a hurtful habit or a ‘besetting sin’) from which you (as a believer) need great deliverance. With John 5: 1-15 in mind, ask yourself the following questions:
 - (a) Do I really want deliverance? (“Wilt Thou be made whole?” – DESIRE.
 - (b) Am I willing to accept the challenge of what seems to be impossible for me? (“Rise) – OBEDIENCE.
 - (c) Will I eliminate the temptation to fall back into my old ways? (“Take up your bed”) – CAUTIOUS MAINTENANCE.

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- (d) **Will I begin creatively to be involved in work for the Lord? ("Walk")
– CREATIVE INVOLVEMENT.**
- (e) **Will I guard myself against relapsing into sin? ("Stop Sinning or
something worse may happen to you") – CONTINUING FIDELITY.**

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OUTLINE – CHAPTER 8

SUBJECT: "I AM THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE!"

Scripture: *"²⁴I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. ²⁷And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. ³¹"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. ³²There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. ³³"You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. ³⁵John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. ³⁶"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹You diligently study[Ⓛ] the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹"I do not accept praise from men, ⁴²but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God[Ⓛ]? ⁴⁵"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (John 5: 24-47)*

Text: *"I say emphatically that anyone who listens to my message and believes in God who sent me has eternal life, and will never be damned for his sin, but has already passed out of death into life." (John 5: 24)*

INTRODUCTION

Jesus promises great rewards to the man who believes.

PROPOSITION

Belief is the key to life to exercise belief in Christ is to discover life – real life!

JESUS - "THE GREAT 'I AM'!"

I. FOUNDATION FOR BELIEF.

- A. WITNESS OF JOHN. (vs. 32-35)**
- B. WORKS OF JESUS. (vs. 36)**
- C. WORDS OF GOD. (vs. 37-38)**
- D. WRITINGS OF SCRIPTURES – MOSES. (vs. 39-47)**

II. EXERCISE OF BELIEF.

- A. CONTINUE TO HEAR CHRIST'S WORD. (vs. 24)**
- B. CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN GOD THROUGH COMMUNION. (vs. 24)**

III. RESULTS OF BELIEF.

- A. ESCAPE THE PRESENT CONDEMNATION AND THE JUDGMENT TO COME. (vs. 24)**
- B. STAND IN A NEW RELATIONSHIP OF LIFE (PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE). (vs. 24)**
 - 1. Becoming daily more and more like Christ.**
 - 2. Spiritual life also means becoming more sensitive to life and to relationships, and to right and wrong.**
 - 3. Another sign of spiritual life is tough mindedness.**
 - 4. Another sign of spiritual life is the exercise of humility and confession.**

CONCLUSION

Believe – that is – commit yourself daily to God, and continually listen to Christ's word.

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CHAPTER 8 –

"I AM THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE!"

INTRODUCTION:

Some people use the common expression, "If you don't quit talking you're going to talk yourself into buying that article." You can "talk yourself into buying something." Using this colloquial expression, I want to suggest to you that you can believe yourself into life! Belief is the key to life. To exercise belief in Christ is to discover life – real life!

Did you know that the theme of the entire book of St. John is belief? "Jesus' disciples saw Him do many other miracles besides the ones told about in this book, but these are recorded so that you will believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing in Him you will have life." (John 20: 30, 31, Living Bible)

PROPOSITION:

Do you want to experience life – real life – wonderful life? Then let belief in Christ be exercised by you.

Jesus promises great rewards to the man who believes: (1) Eternal Life Now (2) Present Peace!

Says John 5: 24: *"²⁴I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

I. FOUNDATION FOR BELIEF.

The object of one's faith must be trustworthy! Is Jesus trustworthy? If He is only a man then He is not, for He claimed to be God, and if He were just a man, then Jesus would be a liar, and therefore would not be trustworthy. A liar is not trustworthy!

A. WITNESS OF JOHN. (vs. 32-35)

"John was the lamp which burns and shines". That was the perfect tribute to John. (a) A lamp bears a borrowed light. It does not light itself; it is lit. (b) John had warmth, for his message was not the cold message of the intellect but the burning message of the kindled heart. (c) John had light. The function of light is to guide, and John pointed men on the way to repentance and to God. (d) In the nature of things a lamp burns itself out. In giving light it consumes itself. John was to decrease while Jesus increased. The true witness burns himself out for God." (Barclay)

The Jews rejected John's witness. "John was a pleasant sensation, to be listened to as long as he said the things they liked, and to be abandoned

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whenever he became awkward.” (Barclay)

B. WORKS OF JESUS. (vs. 36)

When messengers were sent to Jesus from John the Baptist who was in prison, Jesus sent them back with this message for John: *“Go back to John and tell him about the miracles you’ve seen me do – the blind people I’ve healed and the lame people now walking without help, and the cured lepers, and the deaf who hear, and the dead raised to life; and tell him about my preaching the Good News to the poor.”* Then give him this message, *“Blessed are those who don’t doubt me.”* (Matthew 11: 4, 5) But the Jews did doubt Jesus and even attributed the miracles to the power of Satan. (Matthew 9: 34)

The miracles were meant not only as acts of compassion, but as demonstrations of Messianic power over the realm of evil and darkness. They were further evidence of Jesus’ deity.

C. WORDS OF GOD. (vs. 37-38)

God speaks: *“This is my Son, listen to Him.”* He says that through Nature, through the inner voice of conscience and through the Word of God in Scripture. Working from Revelation downward or nature upward, one will come out at the same place – that Jesus is altogether right and unique – the Son of the Living God.

D. WRITINGS OF SCRIPTURES – Moses. (vs. 39-47)

“The Jews thought of the books of Moses as the very word of God. Jesus said: ‘If you had read these books aright, you would have seen that they all pointed to me’ He went on: *‘You think that because you have Moses to be your mediator you are safe; but Moses is the very one who will condemn you. Maybe you could not be expected to listen to me, but you are bound to listen to the words of Moses to which you attach such value – and they all spoke of me.’”* (Barclay; 201)

There is sufficient evidence to show conclusively that Jesus is the Messiah. We have even further evidence of Jesus’ deity: (1) The historical Resurrection; (2) Further fulfilled prophecy; (3) Existence of triumphant Church of Jesus Christ; (4) Cumulative evidence from Religious experience. The objective evidence for supporting Jesus’ claim to deity is overwhelming. What remains is a need to commit oneself to the claims of Christ and to declare Jesus as Lord in a personal subjective way. That brings us to the importance of Belief – its Exercise and its Results.

II. EXERCISE OF BELIEF.

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Belief in Christ is not some static act of the past, but rather an active, dynamic, growing relationship which must be continually exercised. The tenses (Greek) in our text bring that out. Both 'Hear' (listen) and 'Believe' are in the present tense which means continuation, practice, habit. It is continual, habitual hearing and believing that gives results – Life!

A. CONTINUE TO HEAR CHRIST'S WORD. (vs. 24)

The Bible has a lot to say about hearing. Said Jesus, "He who has ears, let him hear". Says the Psalmist: *"I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly."* (Psalm 85: 8) Not to hear Christ's words results in turning again to folly!

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." (Isaiah 1: 2)

"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." (Isaiah 6: 9) It is important not only to hear with the physical ears (to hear words), but also to hear with the spiritual ears (perceive the meaning of the words and begin to apply).

Says God: *"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live."*

Jesus says in Mark 4: 24: *"Take heed what ye hear."* Jesus says in Luke 8: 18: *"Take heed therefore how ye hear."*

Exhorts James: *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."* (1: 19) *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."* (James 1: 22)

This last verse shows the importance of daily translating Christ's word into action. It is the one thing to know the commandments, another to obey them. *"Ye are my disciples if ye DO my commandments."* Not a life of contemplation only, but a life of action also. It is possible to hear a person and not to listen to him. Listening on the deepest level always means action and obedience.

B. CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN GOD THROUGH COMMUNION. (vs. 24)

"To believe God or to believe the Lord is to acknowledge as true the message which comes from Him or the words which He speaks. It is assumed that the message does come from Him, and, therefore, to believe the message is to believe Him." (Westcott; pg. 87)

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"Our Saviour's words depict a privileged position directly governed by the specific condition of habitually hearing and believing. Jesus declares that the happy circumstance of deliverance from present condemnation and of standing passed out of death into life is the privilege only of such as habitually hear His word and believe the Father." (Shank's 'Life In The Son; pg. 61)

Here is a very literal translation of the Greek, noting the full significance of the Greek tense:

"Most assuredly, I am saying to you that the one who habitually hears my Word and is believing in the one having sent me, has right now eternal life, and into judgment and condemnation He does not come, but He is in a present continuing condition resulting from having passed out of death into life." (John 5: 24)

IV. RESULTS OF BELIEF.

A. ESCAPE THE PRESENT CONDEMNATION AND THE JUDGMENT TO COME. (vs. 24)

John says in the third chapter 3: 36: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

So he who is in unbelief, not only faces doom in eternity, but faces and experiences condemnation now. Likewise, he who believes in Christ, not only faces a glorious life in eternity, but experiences the very life of God within him right NOW. The punishment of rejection is both hell on earth and hell hereafter. The reward for believing is both heaven on earth and an infinitely more glorious heaven thereafter. You see, both heaven and hell are portable! They are not only places, but they are also states.

He who continues to believe in God and continues to listen to Christ's words, continues to enjoy eternal life – the very life of God within him NOW.

The Christian is not under judgment now, for he has already accepted Christ's judgment for sin on the cross, and the Christian has judged his own sins through confession and repentance. His sins are gone, and thus the condemnation is gone.

For those who don't believe in the Son and who don't listen to His words, there is condemnation now and terrible future judgment awaiting them. And Jesus will be the righteous and just JUDGE. Look at what the Word say:

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²²After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. ²³Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. ²⁷To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ^{dl} but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰He must become greater; I must become less. (John 3: 22, 23, 27, 29, 30)

B. STAND IN A NEW RELATIONSHIP OF LIFE. (Passed out of death into life). (vs. 24)

Man without Christ is 'dead in trespasses and sins'. Christ quickens the soul of man and resurrects him to new life. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. ²⁵An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew^{dl} over the matter of ceremonial washing." ²⁶They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." (John 3:21, 25, 26)

One who continues (habitually) to listen to Christ's words and continues to believe (trust) in God is the one who continues to experience real spiritual life. What is real spiritual life? The Giant Redwoods of California grew gradually, and in the process of growing, weathered the storms. Spiritual maturity is the ongoing dynamic process of responding to the Spirit's call to love and obedience. We are not a finished product. Have you seen the little button which says, "PBGINFWMY"? (Please Be Patient God Is Not Finished With Me Yet).

We are all CHRISTIANS IN THE MAKING.

Thus, spiritual death results when one has stopped trying. "It is to have come to look on all faults as ineradicable and all virtues as unattainable." (Barclay; pg. 191)

C. SPIRITUAL LIFE ALSO MEANS BECOMING MORE SENSITIVE TO LIFE AND TO RELATIONSHIPS, AND TO RIGHT AND WRONG.

To degenerate in sensitivity (Feelings) is to degenerate into death. A high degree of sensitivity is a sign of a high degree of life. To no longer feel the pangs of guilt or the sword of grief and pity is to be pronounced spiritually dead. One may be physically existing and yet spiritually dead.

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Someone said that what we all needed is a 'revival of feeling'. What a statement! To feel deeply is to communicate deeply, and life depends upon communication.

He who continues to listen (give heed) to Jesus' words and continues to commit his life to God, will find his feelings increasingly becoming sensitized. Do you have strong feelings of love? Do you feel deep hatred for sin and injustice? Is your heart moved with compassion? Do you have a heart for the lost and straying? Do you readily respond to the music of grace and glory? How is your heart? This is an indication of how carefully you are listening to Jesus' words and believing in the Father.

D. ANOTHER SIGN OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IS TOUGH MINDEDNESS.

If real life means tender-heartedness, it also means tough-mindedness. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope within you." The man of spiritual life is the man who is always listening to Jesus' voice – and that means keeping one's mind open to accept new truths. He who loses the thrill of new concepts and new methods has become static and plastic in his thinking, and is in the process of spiritual degeneration. Someone said that the last seven words of the dying church are: "We Never Did It That Way Before." Unwillingness to reason, and unwillingness to adapt and to change!

The discovery of new truth is a sign of vitality and life. Are we excited to enter into religious dialogue? Are we challenged to think hard about moral and social issues, without coming to easy CONCLUSION:s? Do new books excite us? Are we enjoying the memorization and application of Bible portions? Are we open to new and different ideas, and can we discern the false from the true? Are we willing to hammer out the truth for ourselves, or are we satisfied to accept ideas secondhand from tradition and authority? Are we, like the Berean Christians in the Book of Acts, receiving the Word with all readiness of mind, and searching the scriptures daily (Acts 17: 11)? Remember. "The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false."

"It has been commonly said that it is what people do that matters most, but we have frequently neglected the further observation that what people believe determines, in large measure, what they do. It may be better to worship God than to believe in Him, but if we did not have the latter we shall not long have the former." (New Man For Our Times; Trueblood; pg. 110) In other words, what our concept of God is will determine how we worship. What a man believes determines what he is. Shallow thinking means shallow living! "The Christian who wishes to be truly modern (and relevant) will have to pay the price of rigorous thinking." (Ibid; pg. 111) "It is better to

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face the uncomfortable truth than to accept the comforting falsehood." (Ibid; pg. 114)

E. ANOTHER SIGN OF SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THE EXERCISE OF HUMILITY AND CONFESSION.

Wrote James: "*Confess your sins one to another.*" Says Bastian: "The Christian who has caught a glimpse of the holiness and love of God will not be slow to confess his unworthiness. Nor will he be tardy in confessing his mortal weakness and his omission if he has become conscious of such. Often the impassioned prayer of the palmist will tumble from his lips, 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults' – faults hid not from God or others, but from himself. And if he has knowingly sinned, he will be quick to confess and forsake that sin in the light of 1 John 2: 1-2." (The Mature Church Member: pg. 114)

CONCLUSION:

Do you want real life? Then believe yourself into life! Believe – that is – commit yourself daily to God, and continually listen to Christ's word. It is all-important to listen to Christ, for Christ is God! As you practice trusting God and practice listening to the Voice of Christ, then you continue to enjoy eternal life and you remain uncondemned and remain passed out of death into life." (John 5: 24)

Come to Christ today! Confess your sins to God, and start trusting Christ every day for your entire lifetime! Christ gives the REAL THING!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 8

1. **According to John 20: 30-31, what is the theme of the entire book of the Gospel of John?**
2. **If Jesus were ‘only a man’, why would he no longer be ‘trustworthy’, no longer be a person worthy of man’s admiration?**
3. **Why was John’s witness to Jesus, as a ‘burning lamp’, eventually rejected by many Jewish leaders? (Note John 5: 35)**
4. **According to John 5: 36, what is one of the ‘foundation stones’ that provides a reliable basis for belief in Jesus? (Note Matthew 11: 4, 5)**
5. **Who, according to John 5: 37-38, is the ‘Chief Witness’; to Jesus; deity? Why was this witness rejected?**
6. **Whose writings in the Old Testament testify forcefully to the person and the work of Jesus Christ? (Note John 5: 45-47)**
7. **Explain how each of the following powerfully witnesses to the deity of Jesus: (a) Old Testament fulfilled prophecy; (b) Historical resurrection; (c) Existence of the triumphant Church of Jesus Christ; (d) Cumulative evidence from personal religious experience.**
8. **Does the abundance of objective evidence to support Jesus’ claim to deity, automatically result in the world’s masses of people following Christ as the Messiah? Why or why not? What importance do you give to the sharing of this objective evidence with the world’s population, and to the individual acceptance and subjective appropriation of this objective evidence?**
9. **Give your comments on the following statement: “Belief in Christ is not some static act of the past, but rather an active, dynamic, growing relationship which must be continually exercised.”**
10. **Is it possible ‘to hear’ a person and yet not really ‘to listen’ to him? According to John 5: 24, what kind of listening must one give to Jesus, if he expects to receive spiritual life from Christ? Why is ‘listening’ to Christ in our contemporary society so difficult? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Listening to Christ on the deepest level always means action and obedience.” (Note Isaiah 6: 9 and James 1: 22)**
11. **Is it possible to believe the message (words) of Jesus without surrendering to Christ as the Messiah and Lord? Why or why not?**

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12. Give your response to Robert Shank's interpretation of John 5: 24 – *“Our Saviour's words depict a privileged position directly governed by the specific condition of habitually hearing and believing. Jesus declares that the happy circumstance of deliverance from present condemnation and of standing passed out of death into life is the privilege only of such as habitually hear His word and believe the Father.”*
13. With what degree of conviction do you believe the following statements: *“Both heaven and hell are portable. They are not only real places, but they are also states of being right here on earth. He who rejects Christ gets some hell here on earth and a lot of hell hereafter. He who loves Christ gets some heaven here on earth and an infinitely more glorious heaven hereafter. Everyone is either a ‘double loser’ or a ‘double winner’, depending on his personal response or reaction to Christ!”*
14. According to John 5: 22, 25, 26 Jesus is the Source and the Giver of spiritual life. There are many evidences that one is experiencing this new life in Christ. Evaluate the quality of your spiritual life as you carefully and personally answer the following questions:
 - (1) Am I daily becoming more and more like Christ?
 - (2) Am I daily seeking to eradicate my personal faults and seeking to attain Christlike virtues?
 - (3) As I becoming more sensitive to other people's feelings of grief and personal hurt, and am I trying daily to help carry the heavy burdens of others?
 - (4) Do I feel deep hatred for sin and injustice?
 - (5) Am I keeping my mind open to accept new truths, and am I regularly experiencing the thrill of discovering new concepts and new methods as a result of reading God's Word and thought-provoking Christian books?
 - (6) Am I, like the Berean believers (Acts 17: 11), receiving the Word with all readiness of mind, searching the Scriptures daily?
 - (7) Am I quick to confess my unworthiness to God and my faults to others?
15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: *“What a man believes determines what he is. Shallow thinking means shallow living. It is better to face the uncomfoting truth than to accept the comfoting falsehood.”*

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 9

SUBJECT: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!

Scripture: ²²The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. ²³Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." ²⁸Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" ²⁹Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." ³⁰So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'^[a] ³²Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." ³⁵Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." ⁴¹At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" ⁴³"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. ⁴⁴"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.'^[b] Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." ⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread

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that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:22-58)

Text: "I am the bread of Life." (John 6: 48)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is the life. He offers life – real life, eternal life – to all people! That is the most exciting revelation, this side of heaven! Christianity is a Gift to be received by willing hearts!

PRODUCTION

Christianity is able to make valid its claim to make bad men good, and to make weak Christians strong.

I. MAN'S PERVERTED HUNGER.

- A. These People Wanted To Exploit Christ For Selfish Gains.**
- B. These People Were Sensual By Nature – Motivated By Sensual Desires.**

II. GOD'S LASTING SATISFACTION. (John 6: 28-58)

- A. SOURCE OF SATISFACTION (JESUS THE BREAD – John 6: 29, 33-35)**
- B. MEANS OF SATISFACTION (ASSIMILATION OF JESUS' STRENGTH INTO PERSONAL LIFE – John 6: 47-58)**

CONCLUSION

"But what is the coming? It is the opening of heart and minds to the Good News which He brings, and which concerns Himself. All that is needed is the will to do this; our coming to Him is a movement of desire and will." (William Temple)

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CHAPTER 9

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!"

INTRODUCTION

Someone asked a group of students one time: "Is Christianity an offer or a demand?" Only after considerable thought could the group agree that Christianity is primarily an offer.

So it is with too many today. So many see Christianity as a demand – obligations to do or not to do, ethical creeds to live by, standards to uphold, a philosophy to understand, or a way of life to strive for. Christianity has demands. Christianity has ethics. Christianity has standards. Christianity has philosophical ideas. But Christianity is not morality, ethics, philosophy. Christianity is not even primarily a religion. Christianity is a relationship – a vital, dynamic love relationship with a Person! The very Person of Christ!

This means that Christianity is an offer – an offer of life and love and power and beauty! Strength for the powerless, purity for the defiled, companionship for the lonely, respect for the despised, comfort for the sorrowing, hope for the despairing, strength for the weak, forgiveness for the guilty! Said Jesus, *"I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10) *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* (John 1: 4) *"He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."* (John 3: 36) *"I shall give...a well of water springing up into everlasting life."* (John 4: 14) *"He that heareth my word...is passed from death unto life."* (John 5: 24) *He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* (John 8: 12) *I am the resurrection and the life".* (John 11: 25) *"I am the way, the truth, and the life".* (John 14:6)

Life – with all its pulsating, exciting, dynamic, personal qualities – is the theme of John's Gospel. Jesus is the Life. He offers life – real life, eternal life – to all people! That is the most exciting revelation, this side of Heaven! Christianity is primarily an offer, not primarily a demand! Christianity is a Gift to be received by willing hearts!

PRODUCTION:

The essential offer of the Gospel of Christ is newness of life. Newness of life, not betterness! A new quality, not a greater quantity! God's own strength, not merely man's improved strength!

Christianity is able to make valid its claim to make bad men good, and to make weak Christians strong.

Jesus said, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven! If any man eats of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* (John 6: 51)

JESUS - "THE GREAT I AM!"

I. MAN'S PERVERTED HUNGER

A. THESE PEOPLE WANTED TO EXPLOIT CHRIST FOR SELFISH GAINS.

Following the miraculous feeding of the 5000 (John 6: 1-13), the crowd sought to take Jesus by force to make Him into a King. The Jewish crowd reasoned that with such miraculous power, Jesus would be the ideal one to crown as their Messiah and King. Surely such a powerful person, serving as King of the Jews, could continue to supply their physical wants, and most of all, could mobilize a great Jewish army to throw off the Roman oppression. What an opportunity for the crowds!

But Jesus, easily perceiving their carnal ambitions and motives, in seeking to force Him into Kingship, *"departed again into a mountain himself alone."* (John 6: 15b)

But the crowd searched out Jesus, and when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because 'ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.'" (John 6: 26)*

The theme of John 6 is "Jesus the Bread from Heaven." Jesus offers Himself as Bread, but He offers Himself on His own terms.

There is danger, as in the case of the Jews, of using Jesus for our own carnal motives. Do we simply love Jesus for what we can get out of Him? Do we simply want physical bread from Jesus, as the crowds wanted?

We want Jesus to heal us when we are sick. We want Him to comfort us when in sorrow. We want Him to strengthen us when we are in a difficulty. We want Him to give us peace when we are in turmoil. We want him to give us a good life.

As a pastor, I have often experienced people using God or the Church, during times of difficulties, to get them out of scrapes. Or others use the Church as a service to supply their physical needs, but soon they forget God after those services are performed.

I think of the baptism of the baby. The parents took the oath to raise the child in the Church. After baptizing the child, I never again saw the parents in Church.

I remember the hours I spent with the woman who was facing serious surgery. I prayed. She prayed. She made promises that if God would touch her physically, that she would serve God. God did miraculously bring her

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through the very serious surgery. But from that day of healing to this day, I have not yet seen her in Church.

I spent months counseling a couple, seeking to get them together. Promises were made. Attendance at Church was even a part of their visible efforts during counseling. After they finally got together, I have not seen them in Church.

A couple whom I married made promises regarding God and the Church. After I married them, I have not seen them in Church.

When a crisis is passed or a need has been supplied and normal times have returned, the big promises are forgotten and God and His Church and His people are ignored.

Often, during times of prosperity, people have nothing to do with Jesus. They were previously simply using Jesus' services to get them out of messes. Some pray during dangers, but they forget Him during secure and prosperous times.

"When Jesus comes to us with some stern demand for sacrifice, with some challenge to effort, with the offer of some cross, we will have nothing to do with Him." (Barclay's John 206)

How would you feel if your so-called friend turned out to be only a 'fair weather' friend? As long as you gave gifts to your friend, he remained your friend, but when you had needs that would demand great sacrifice from your friend, your friend left you!! (John 6: 66) How do you think God feels when a person calls upon Him for help during a crisis, but who forgets Him when the crisis passes? God is not willing that any man should simply use him to advance selfish causes or to get selfish people out of scrapes.

Are you God's friend at all times – when He gives you material gifts, and also when He makes spiritual demands on you? Remember, friendship with God is friendship during 'thick and thin,' during prosperity and poverty, during popularity and persecution, during loss and gain, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for time and for eternity.

Are you looking for Jesus, simply in hopes that He will build your bank account, or increase your power, or destroy your enemies, or fight for your cause? Have you heard people say, "I think God is on my side?" How foolish! God will not be exploited or used by anyone. Lincoln, in effect, one time said, "I am not concerned to know if God is on my side, but I am greatly concerned to know if I am on His side." Says William Temple: "If what is eternal is valued chiefly as a means to any temporal result, the true order is inverted, and it is likely that the eternal and the temporal goods will be

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missed alike." (John pg. 82)

Said Jesus to the fed multitude of people who were attempting to make Jesus a King: *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."* (John 6: 25-26, NIV) Some want merely the benefits of Christianity, and don't see the spiritual responsibilities of discipleship. If one follows Christ only for material benefits, he will eventually turn back from following Christ. (John 6: 66)

B. THESE PEOPLE WERE SENSUAL BY NATURE – MOTIVATED BY SENSUAL DESIRES.

Those who sought Jesus did not seek Him to worship and adore Him for the gracious miracle of God's power and love. Rather, they were seeking Jesus for bread.

Barclay notes, "It is as if Jesus said: 'You cannot think about your souls for thinking of your stomachs.'" (Barclay's John; pg. 211) The Bible speaks of people in the last days whose god will be their stomachs! (Philippians 3: 19) Such were these materialistically – oriented Jews. "They had not yet reached the first stage of Christian faith, which consists of profound dissatisfaction on the part of man and his spiritual condition. They had no sense of seriousness of sin, no longing for a higher kind of life." (Tasker; pg. 94)

'Food' (material and secular and political aspirations) is Trash really – Has no benefit to health; in fact, it is detrimental to health and is poisonous to spiritual system. What man calls food, God calls poison.

Hedonism – "If it feels good, do it." – (Picture of Rhinoceros wallowing in the mud and enjoying it.) Pleasure is all-important to such a person. The question is not asked: "Is it right!" But rather "Is it pleasurable!" Through his disregard for morality and his practice of licentiousness, fornication and adultery, the sensualist is wallowing in the mud of sin.

Morality is not a consideration. Sensual pleasure is the only consideration. Love is turned into lust, and concern for others is replaced with selfish and sensual considerations.

One phrase of popular song of some time ago stands as a continuing tragic commentary of the immorality of our sensual age: "Right of wrong, day by day, all my love, all the way."

(Illustration of sensuality expressed in a conversation of two women in a bakery shop.) No apology or embarrassment, but open conversation: "Last

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time I saw you, you were living with a neat guy. Are you still with him?"
"No, we broke up. We have each gone on to bigger and better things".

Their conversation reminds me of the verse of the one time popular pop song: "I will never love you. The cost of love's too dear, but though I'll never love you, I'll live with you one year."

To feed on the 'food' of hedonism, is to be consumed and destroyed by lust. It is 'food' which perishes.

To live according to the popular philosophy "If it feels good, do it," is to live "at the mercy of the desires of our lower nature." (Barclay's Ephesians 2: 3) Notes Barclay: "To live according to the dictates of the flesh is simply to live in such a way that our lower nature, the worst part of us, dominates our lives." (Barclay's Ephesians 118) Tragic is the picture of God's judgment on the passion – dominated life: "*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections.*" (Romans 1: 26a)

Solomon of old, sought to feed his soul with sensual pleasures. It is said in the Scriptures that he had mistresses galore. But his soul was not fed. Sensualism turned out to be '*food that spoiled*' (John 6: 27). He said that "Futility of futilities, all is futile."

If life is so short and if sin pays its own penalty in time and in eternity, does it not stand to reason that one is a fool to become enamored by the toys of sensual pleasure? '*The world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.*' (I John 3: 17)

The Prodigal Son took his fill of lustful pleasures, but he ended up in the pig pen, eating food fit only for the pigs! The so-called 'food' which the world offers is not fit for God-stamped and God-starved creatures!

Says Mavis: "Secularism, in inverting life values, neglects the interest of the immortal spirit of man, assuming that this spirit can be satisfied with earthly things. It fails to see, with Hannah More, that, the soul on earth is an immortal guest, compelled to starve at an unreal feast; a pilgrim panting for the rest to come; an exile anxious for its native home." (Psychology of Christian Experience, pg. 114)

The luxury of Roman society during the first century was unparalleled. Meals costing thousands of dollars were not uncommon. "It was at this time that they served feasts of peacocks' brains and nightingales' tongues." (Barclay's John, pg. 212) The Romans would try anything for a new thrill, because they were both appallingly rich and appallingly hungry. As Matthew Arnold wrote: "In his cool hall with haggard eyes, The Roman noble lay; He drove abroad in furious quise Along the Appian Way; He made

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a feast, drank fierce and fast; He crowned his hair with flowers; No easier nor no quicker passed The impracticable hours." (Barclay's John, pg. 212)

Jesus said: *"Do not work for the food which perishes, but work for the food which lasts, and which gives eternal life, that food which the Son of Man will give you."* (John 6: 26, Barclay)

What Jesus said is a clear reemphasis of the message of the Old Testament Prophets. Said Isaiah: *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."* (Isaiah 55: 1, 2)

A strict diagnosis of man's case is that he is 'heaven – starved.' Nothing on earth can satisfy the real soul hunger of man's soul.

II. GOD'S LASTING SATISFACTION (John 6: 28-58)

Discovery of Soul Satisfaction through Indwelling Christ.

A. SOURCE OF SATISFACTION (JESUS THE BREAD – John 6: 29, 33-35)

"What does faith mean? It means being in such a relationship with God that we are his friends, not terrified of Him any more but knowing Him as our Father and our friend and giving Him the trust and the obedience and the submission which naturally arise from this new relationship." (Barclay's John, 214)

Jesus claims to be the true source of satisfaction for the deep soul hunger. **"The manna was not really the bread of God; it was only the symbol of the bread of God. The bread of God was he who came down from heaven and gave men not simply satisfaction from physical hunger, but life. Jesus was claiming that the only real satisfaction was in him."** (Barclay's John, pg. 216)

Jesus is the Bread of Life. He is the essential, without which life could not go on. Real life is based on a relationship with God, and that relationship is only made possible through Christ. **"The hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ and through Him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied."** (Barclay's John; pg. 217)

B. MEANS OF SATISFACTION (ASSIMILATION OF JESUS' STRENGTH INTO PERSONAL LIFE – (John 6: 47-58)

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To drink Christ's blood is to partake of Christ's very life – for the life is in the blood. To take Christ's life into the very center of one's being is to experience Christ's thoughts, is to experience Christ's purposes, is to experience Christ's power and glory!

A trip to a historic spot becomes personally meaningful only if one has experienced it; otherwise it is only an external thing that someone talks about.

Or think of a book. Only when one reads and assimilates the words and ideas and stories of a book, does the book become a personal experience to him. "One the book was outside him. Now it is inside him and he can feed upon it." (Barclay's John; pg. 224)

"It is so with Jesus. So long as he remains a figure in a book he is external to us; but when he enters into our hearts we can feed upon the life and the strength and the dynamic vitality that he gives to us. Jesus said that we must drink his blood. He is saying: 'You must stop thinking of me as a subject for theological debate; you must take me into you, and you must come into me; and then you will have real life.'" (Barclay's John; 225)

Just as food is assimilated into the body to become a new part of the very life of the body, so Christ must be taken into the very inner soul of man to form new life in man. Partaking of the flesh and blood represents symbolically the appropriation of the benefits of the death of Jesus.

What benefits are derived through the death of Jesus?

- (1) Atonement. Jesus' blood cleanses the sinner from all unrighteousness.**
- (2) Reconciliation. Jesus destroys the enmity between God and man, and makes possible a new unity and friendship.**
- (3) Peace. No longer does man have fear of a revengeful God, for God's wrath has been appeased and God's justice honored, while, at the same time, man's acceptance by God made possible.**
- (4) Hope. Jesus' death on the cross demonstrated God's love and mercy for man and makes possible the fulfillment of God's promise of eternal life for mankind. The future for man is as bright as the promises of God.**
- (5) Hungers are for significance, belonging, and security. Christ**

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the Bread gives man significance and self-respect and a sense of worthiness. Christ the Bread gives man a sense of belonging and acceptance and fellowship. Christ, the Bread, gives man a sense of security, peace, and dependability.

So we see some of the great benefits of the death of Jesus – Atonement, Reconciliation, Peace, Hope, Satisfaction of man's basic needs. When we assimilate Christ into the very soul of our being, we feed on the Bread of Life!

"True nourishment, which brings eternal life, is possible only for those who accept His sacrifice, who are incorporated by faith into His body, who are crucified with Him that they may live with Him, and who abide in Him because He abides in them – truths which are sacramental set forth every time Christians partake of broken bread and outpoured wine at the Lord's Supper". (Tasker; pg. 95)

Jesus, the Bread of God, is offered to feed man's basic spiritual hungers. "The feeding miracle is a sign, an acted parable of the spiritual sustenance which is always available to the believer as the result of Jesus' sacrifice". (Tasker; 96) Just as the multitude was filled, with food left over, so Jesus, the Great Provider, always gives more than enough to satisfy man's spiritual hungers. He never leaves man destitute or partially fed.

How does one know that Jesus is the Bread of Life? The Jews asked, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat"? Jesus answered, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you*".

Christ says "*It must be*". People ask, "How can it be"? Jesus answers, "*It must be*".

"What does it mean but this, that you cannot know how it is done except by doing it"? (Brooks; The Candle of the Lord; pg. 239) One must experience Christ for himself.

"Taste and see for yourself that the Lord is good". Food supports a man by becoming the man. Christ supports a man by becoming the very inward life of the man. Food becomes the strength of life-blood of the veins. Christ becomes the strength of the spiritual life – blood of the soul. Without food the body can do nothing. "*Without me*", says Jesus, "*You can do nothing*".

Christ has promised to strengthen the believer "in the inner man". Christ gives strength for the difficult task. He infuses His very

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presence and power into our inner soul, enabling us to "love the thing that He commands." (Brooks, *Ibid*; 242) *"He sheds abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5: 5) Christ's strength is an inner strength. "Every vital strength must be the strength which incorporates itself with the very being of the thing that it supports. Except we eat we can have no life in us". (Brooks; Ibid; pgs. 242, 243)*

"To feed on Christ, then, is to get His strength into us to be our strength. You feed on the cornfield and the strength of the cornfield comes into you and is your strength. You feed on the cornfield and then go and build your house, and it is the cornfield in your strong arm that builds the house, that cuts down the trees and piles the stone and lifts the roof into its place. You feed on Christ and then go and live your life, and it is Christ in you that lives your life, that helps the poor, that tells the truth, that fights the battle, and that wins the crown". (Phillips Brooks; *Ibid*; 246)

To eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son, is a vivid way of saying that we take into us the very strength of Christ's character – His purity, His truth, His mercifulness, His very holiness. 'Christ in you' is your hope of glory. (Colossians 1: 27)

Someone said, "It is not hard to live the Christian life it is impossible". Without Christ living in you, you can do nothing. You have no strength, no peace, no purpose, no joy, no wisdom, no purity, no truth, and no mercy. That which is inherent in man is sin and evil. Without God, the heart of man is desperately wicked. (Jeremiah 17: 9) Any goodness, any love, any mercy, any peace, and any joy are borrowed – all made possible because of the indwelling Christ. The hungry soul who partakes of the Bread of Life – Jesus is made strong and vital. *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". (John 6: 51)*

"It is this Bread – which He Himself is – which gives to the soul a satisfaction that endures eternally. 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. The negatives are the strongest in the Greek language; they rule out not only a fact but the bare possibility of the fact. Hunger and thirst become simply impossible to him that cometh". (Temple; pg. 85)

CONCLUSION:

"But what is the coming? It is the opening of heart and minds to the Good News which He brings, and which concerns Himself. All that is needed is the will to do this; our coming to

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Him is a movement of desire and will." (William Temple; 'Whosoever Will May Come'; pg. 85)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 9

1. **If Christianity is not merely ethical creeds to live by, or standards to uphold, or a philosophy to understand, then what is Christianity? Is Christianity an “offer” or a “demand”? (Note John 1; 4; 3: 36; 4: 14; 5: 24; 8: 12; 10: 10; 11: 25; 14: 6)**
2. **On the basis of what power and what authority is Christianity able to make valid its claim to make bad men good and weak Christians strong?**
3. **Following the miracle of the feeding of the multitude (John 6: 1-13), what did the crowd seek to do with Jesus and how did Jesus respond? (John 6: 15) What motivated the crowd when they sought to force Jesus to assume a kind of special political leadership? (John 6: 14, 26)**
4. **Illustrate how people today, as in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, seek to use Jesus for their own selfish causes. Do some people pray only during times of danger, but then forget Jesus during secure and prosperous times? (Note John 6: 56)**
5. **Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statement: “Friendship with God is friendship during ‘thick and thin’, during prosperity and poverty, during popularity and persecution, during lose and gain, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for time and for eternity.”**
6. **Give your interpretation of the following command of Jesus: “Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” (John 6: 26) In terms of action and attitudes and priorities and values, describe the person who is more interested in his ‘stomach’ than he is interested in his ‘soul’. (Note Philippians 3: 19; Matthew 16: 26; Colossians 3: 2; Ephesians 2: 3)**
7. **From your own personal experience or from observation of others, give an example that illustrates the truth of the following description of a person who is without faith in Christ: “The soul on earth is an immortal guest, compelled to starve at an unreal feast; a pilgrim panting for the rest to come; an exile anxious for its native home.”**
8. **Describe both the ‘food’ of the world that (spiritually-speaking) ‘spoils’, and the “food that endures to eternal life”. (John 6: 27; Isaiah 55: 1, 2)**
9. **If Jesus is the ‘Bread of Life’ – i.e., the essential without which spiritual life cannot be found or maintained – then describe what one must do to ‘partake’ of the ‘Bread of Life’. (Note John 6: 45-58)**
10. **Both describe and illustrate the truth of the following statement: “Partaking of the flesh and the blood (John 6: 53) represents symbolically the appropriation of the benefits of the death of Jesus.”**

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Describe the following benefits of the death of Christ, as these personally apply to you: (a) Atonement, (b) Reconciliation, (c) Peace, (d) Hope.

11. Tell how Jesus, the "Bread of Life", satisfies each of the the following basic 'hungers' of mankind: (a) Need for significance and self-respect, (b) Need for a sense of belonging and acceptance, (c) Need for a sense of security.
12. Give your response to the following statement: "True nourishment, which brings eternal life, is possible only for those who accept His sacrifice, who are incorporated by faith into His body, who are crucified with Him that they may live with Him, and who abide in Him because He abides in them – truths which are sacramentally set forth every time Christians partake of broken bread and outpoured wine at the Lord's Supper."
13. Do you believe that the "feeding miracle" (John 5: 1-13) serves as an "acted parable" to illustrate God's boundless resources which are available to meet every human need and "spiritual hunger"? What specific 'hungers' in your soul do you desire to have satisfied with the "Bread of Life"? Do you presently have a need for significance (self-esteem), or a need for acceptance and 'belonging', or a need for greater security?
14. From your own personal experience, share how you have found deep soul satisfaction from Christ, as described in the following statements: "Just as the multitude was filled, with food left over (John 6: 12-13), so Jesus the Great Provider, always gives more than enough to satisfy man's spiritual hungers. He never leaves man destitute or partially fed." (Note John 6: 35)
15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "It is impossible to live the Christian life without Christ living in you. You have no strength, no peace, no purpose, no joy, no wisdom, no purity, no truth, and no mercy – unless you have 'eaten' the Living Bread' (Christ)!"

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 10

SUBJECT: "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!"

Scripture: "¹²When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." ¹³The Pharisees challenged him, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid." ¹⁴Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. ¹⁸I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me." ¹⁹Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come. ²¹Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." ²²This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come?'" ²³But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." ²⁵"Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied. ²⁶"I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." ²⁷They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. ²⁸So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. ²⁹The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." ³⁰Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him. *The Children of Abraham* ³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." ³³They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants^[6] and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" ³⁴Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. ³⁸I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.]" ³⁹"Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would^[6] do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native

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language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God." ⁴⁸The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" ⁴⁹"I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." ⁵²At this Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" ⁵⁴Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" ⁵⁸"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" ⁵⁹At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds." (John 8: 12-59)

Text: "I am the Light of the World: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8: 12)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus claimed to be the only true and complete source of truth and enlightenment. Enlightenment regarding God's nature and work, enlightenment regarding the Son's relationship to the Father, enlightenment regarding the nature of man's problems, enlightenment regarding the way to man's restoration and fulfillment. Jesus, the Light, reveals the true understanding regarding the four basis subjects of life – God, Man, Sin, Jesus Christ.

PROPOSITION

When man recognizes the true nature of his problem and turns to Jesus the Light, then God solves man's serious problem, giving life and light to the receptive person.

- I. THE SOURCE – JESUS, THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF GOD.
 - A. JESUS' UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER.
 - B. JESUS UNIQUE CLAIMS OF POWER.

- II. THE PROBLEM – MAN, THE SLAVE OF SIN.
 - A. MAN'S FALSE SECURITY.
 - B. MAN'S SERIOUS INDICTMENT.

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III. THE SOLUTION – SURRENDER TO THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

- A. Man's Personal Response.**
- B. Man's Exciting Fulfillment.**

CONCLUSION

Have you come in faith to Jesus? Are you willing to hold to His teachings? Will you closely follow Christ the rest of your life? If so, you will wonderfully experience – 'The Light of the World!'

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CHAPTER 10

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!"

INTRODUCTION

"In this passage Jesus makes the great claim: *'I am the Light of the World.'* It is very likely that the background against which He made it doubly vivid and impressive. The festival with which John connects these discourses is the Festival of Tabernacles (John 7: 2)...On the evening of its first day there was a ceremony called the Illumination of the Temple. It took place in the court of the women. The court was surrounded with deep galleries, erected to hold the spectators. In the centre four great candelabra were prepared. When the dark came the four great candelabras were lit and, it was said, they sent such a blaze of light throughout Jerusalem that every courtyard was lit up with their brilliance. Then all night long, until the cock-crow the next morning, the greatest and the wisest and the holiest men in Israel danced before the Lord and sang psalms of joy and praise while the people watched. Jesus is saying: *'You have seen the blaze of the Temple illuminations piercing the darkness of the night. I am the Light of the World, and, for the man who follows me there will be light, not only for one exciting night, but for all the pathway of his life. The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end it flickers and dies. I am the Light which lasts for ever!'*" (Barclay's John; pgs. 10, 11)

Light pierces the darkness and illuminates everything in its path. Jesus said, *'I am the Light of the World.'* Jesus claimed to be the only true and complete source of truth and enlightenment. Enlightenment regarding God's nature and work, enlightenment regarding the Son's relationship to the Father, enlightenment regarding the nature of man's problems, enlightenment regarding the way of man's restoration and fulfillment.

Jesus, the Light, reveals the true understanding regarding the four basis subjects of life – God, Man, Sin, Jesus Christ. Each of these four subjects are dealt with in John 8.

PROPOSITION

In seeking to understand the true relationship between these four basic subjects of life, let us look at:

- (1) The Source – Jesus, the Light and Life of God;**
- (2) The Problem – Man, the Slave of Sin;**
- (3) The Solution – Surrender to the Claims of Christ.**

When man recognizes the true nature of his problem and turns to Jesus the Light, then God solves man's serious problem, giving life and light to the receptive person.

I. THE SOURCE – JESUS, THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF GOD.

A. JESUS' UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER.

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Jesus claims the ability to give life and light to all who come to Him. Said Jesus, *"I am the light of the World. Whosoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (vs. 12)

Such a claim is only valid if Jesus had a unique relationship with God. Jesus claimed such a special relationship with the Father God, and believed that His Source of Power was derived from His Father.

(1) *'I know where I came from and where I am going...I am not alone.*

(2) *I stand with the Father who sent me."* (vs. 14, 16)

Jesus was certain of His origin and His purpose and His destiny. He claimed no lesser authority and backing than that of the Heavenly Father.

(3) *"I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the one who sent me – the Father".* (vs. 18)

Notes Barclay, "Jesus was so aware of his closeness to God that He needed no other authority for His claims than His own relationship to God." (John, pg. 14) However, to satisfy the Jewish law that "any statement must be founded on the evidence of two witnesses before it could be regarded as true," (Barclay) Jesus claimed His Father as His second witness. So Jesus claims that both He and His Father agree in their witness regarding Jesus' Person and Power.

(4) *"If you knew me, you would know my Father also."* (vs. 19)

Knowledge of Jesus brings automatic knowledge of God. In fact, one cannot know the Father without knowing the Son.

(5) *"What I have heard from Him (the Father) I tell the world."*

Jesus communicates accurately the Father's great message of life and light and love.

(6) *"The one who sent me is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases Him."* (vs. 29)

Jesus' communion with the Father is intimate because His obedience to the Father is perfect.

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- (7) *"My Father...is the one who glorifies me...I know Him and keep His word." (vs. 54, 55)*

Jesus is glorified by the Father because Jesus knows God intimately.

B. JESUS UNIQUE CLAIMS OF POWER.

Jesus not only claimed a unique relationship with the Father, but Jesus also claimed unique power – the power of Deity!

- (1) *"I am the Light of the World." (vs. 12)*

Notes Barclay, "When Jesus made His claim to be the Light of the World the scribes and Pharisees reacted with hostility. That claim would sound even more astonishing to them than to us. To them it would sound like a claim – as indeed it was – to be the Messiah, and, even more, to do the work that only God could do. The word 'light' was specially associated in Jewish thought and language with God: 'The Lord is my light' (Psalms 27: 1); 'The Lord will be your everlasting light' (Isaiah 60: 19); 'By His light I walked through darkness' (Job 29: 3); 'When I sit in darkness the Lord will be a light to me!' (Micah 7: 8); The Rabbis declared that the name of the messiah was Light. When Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World, He was making a claim than which none could possibly be higher." (Barclay's John; pg. 13)

- (2) *"Before Abraham Was, I AM". (vs. 58)*

This is a claim to deity and to pre-existence. One title for God is 'I AM'. Jesus assumed that title, and in assuming that title, He was claiming eternal pre-existence with the Father. This title speaks of the timelessness of Jesus. *"There never was a time when He came into being; there never will be a time when He is not in being."* Barclay's John, pg. 36)

II. THE PROBLEM – MAN THE SLAVE OF SIN

Jesus offers Himself as the Source of solving man's problems. Jesus' promises are backed by His power. Jesus has a special relationship with the Father, and came directly from the Father. Therefore, He has the resources to deal with the problem of man.

However, before applying Christ's resources, there must be an accurate analysis of the nature of man. Chapter 8 provides a cross section description of man's sinful

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nature. Only as one thinks realistically about man's problem, can one wholeheartedly appropriate Christ's solution.

A. MAN'S FALSE SECURITY.

- (1) *We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been slaves of anyone.*" (vs. 33).

Notes Barclay, "For the Jew Abraham was the greatest figure in all religious history; and the Jew considered himself safe and secure in the favor of God simply because he was a descendant of Abraham...They believed that Abraham had gained such merit from his goodness that this merit was sufficient, not only for himself but for all his descendants also." (pg. 25)

- (2) Modern-day counterparts – we are safe and acceptable to God"

- (a) Because of our religious heritage. Need we remind ourselves that God has no grand-children, only children! There is no such thing as borrowed righteousness from our forefathers! The faith of our fathers is not a substitute for personal faith. "Someone asked Rufus Moseley if he were a mystic. 'No', he replied, 'I'm just a first-hander'." (Song of Ascent's, pg. 43) The Jews sought to gain God's acceptance based on Abraham's righteousness. They did not know God first-hand. There are still those seeking to live from the spiritual capital of their parents or grandparents. It does not work.

Dr. William Sangster, the great English preacher, points out that in his country the prison population is increasing. Asks Dr. Sangster: "Is it only a coincidence that the generation which saw the churches empty saw the prisons full?" And the prisons are being filled by some youth whose parents are very decent people, but non-Church-goers. However, it is discovered that the grandparents of the youth were godly, Church-going people. The parents of these prison youth were "living on the fine past of their forebears and the account was now overdrawn." (Demaray; *Alive To God Through Prayer*; pg. 55) The spiritual capital was overdrawn by the time the third generation reached young adulthood. One is not safe and acceptable to God because of his great spiritual or religious heritage. One must know God firsthand.

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(b) Because of national privilege. There is a common nationalistic belief that "God has providentially anointed America as His 'New Israel', giving America a special destiny in the modern world." (Politics, Americanism, and Christianity; by Perry Cotham; pgs. 135. 136) Many feel, similar to the way the Jews felt, that because they are a citizen of a certain nation, they are favored of God. Being an American is synonymous to being a Christian. Loyalty to America is the same as loyalty to God. If one is a decent citizen, if he believes in democracy, if he believes in God's existence, if he believes in the equality of all people – these beliefs are accepted as the criteria of Christianity.

B. Man's Serious Indictment

A serious indictment comes to a man who has not accepted God's evaluation of corrupt nature, but who is instead resting in false security.

- (1) Ignorance of Jesus' Identity – "You have no idea where I come from or where I am going". (vs. 14b) "The test of a man is his reaction to Jesus." (Barclay; pg. 28) What one thinks of Jesus is the test of the authenticity of one's profession. Those who declare that Jesus is merely a great teacher or prophet are ignorant of Jesus' identity. That ignorance of Jesus' identity is based upon rejection of the Light, not because of lack of knowledge.
- (2) Worldly System of Judgment - "*You judge by human standards.*" (vs. 15a) This kind of judgment is based on human knowledge and human standards, and can never see below the surface of things. The worldly system of judgment sees only some of the facts – not all of the facts. They could not fathom the possibility that the lowly Carpenter of Nazareth could be the Son of the Living God. Man looks on the outward appearance, not on the heart. When looking at Jesus, all they could say was: "*Is not this the son of Joseph whom all of us have known. How is he any different than any one else?*"
- (3) Lack of Personal Experience - "*You do not know me or my Father.*" (vs. 19a) 'Knowledge' refers to intimate and personal acquaintance of Jesus. It is not mere intellectual knowledge, but experiential knowledge. It is a first-hand acquaintance with Jesus.

The Jews knew about God theologically, but they did not know Him personally. Head knowledge must become heart

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knowledge. Facts must be translated into experience. Religion must become relationship.

- (4) **Controlled by Worldly Values – “*You are from below...You are of the World*”.** (vs. 23) The problem with the Jews was thinking literalistically. They failed to understand spiritual matters. They interpreted life from their limited viewpoint. They failed to see the spiritual nature of Jesus’ Kingdom. They saw almost everything in terms of the physical, tangible, visible, literal, and rational. They failed to see things from Jesus’ viewpoint of faith which involved the spiritual, intangible, invisible, symbolic, eternal viewpoint of faith.

If their minds could not comprehend Jesus’ words, they simply denied the message and sought to destroy the messenger. Pride in their national and religious heritage blinded them to the reality of their own spiritual condition and to the reality of God’s Light. Worldly values consist in comparing oneself favorably to some other inferior reference. These proud Jews took pride in their religious ‘purity’. In contrast to the impurity of the Samaritans in their midst.

Controlled by worldly values, they denounced the Son of the Living God and assigned to Him their most despicable terms – “*A Samaritan and demon – possessed*”. (vs. 48)

- (5) **Slave To Habitual Sinning – “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin”.** (vs. 34) Notes Barclay, “The man who sins does NOT do what he likes; he does what sin likes. A man can let a habit get such a grip of him that he cannot do without it. He can let some self-indulgence so dominate him that he is powerless to break away from it. He can get into such a state that in the end, as Seneca said, he hates and loves sins at one and the same time. So far from doing what he likes the sinner has lost the power to do what he likes.” (Barclay’s John; 23, 24)

Tasker concisely notes: “Whoever habitually asserts his own will, priding himself on his own independence, following his own inclination, and primarily concerned with pleasing himself – whoever, in a word, is living a self-centered life – is a slave. Such a person is confined within the limits of his own self-interest.” (John; pg. 119)

- (6) **Preoccupation with Selfish Interests – “No room for my word”.** (vs. 37) *The hearts of these Jews were so crowded with selfish interests, that there was no room for Jesus. When Jesus was*

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born, there was no room for Him in the inn. When he was rejected because of the truth of His message, there was no room for Him in the Jewish synagogues. He came to His own world, and His own people rejected Him. (John 1: 11) "The only place where there was room for Him was on a cross. He sought an entry to the over-crowded hearts of men; He could not find it; and still His search – and His rejection - goes on". (Barclay's Luke; pg. 16)

**Room for pleasure, Room for business.
But for Christ the crucified
Not a place that He can enter
In the life for which He Died.**

- (7) *Satanic Source of Evil Actions = "You belong to your father the Devil". (vs. 44) "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but He sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.'" (John 8: 42-47; NIV)*

- (8) **Prospect of Spiritual Death – If you do not believe that I am (the one I claim to be), you will indeed die in your sins". (vs.24, 21).**

Spiritual death is separation from God eternally. God does not will that any man should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God's perfect will is the salvation of all mankind. God's permissive will allow men to reject the offer of life and choose the way of death. Those who refuse to accept the clear claims of Jesus must accept the penalty of rejection, which is eternal death.

There are only two groups of people in the world – those who live by God's will and those who live by their own will. To God-rejecters, Jesus must say in the end, "Thy will be done". If one wills to reject Christ, then one wills to die, for only in Christ is life. He who rejects Light, must accept Death – eternal Death!

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Those who practice sin are in danger of the prospect of spiritual death. *"Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them". (Romans 1: 32)*

III. THE SOLUTION – SURRENDER TO THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

In gazing at the serious problem of man, we have been occasionally glancing at the glorious solution to that problem. That solution is surrender to the claims of Christ.

A. MAN'S PERSONAL RESPONSE.

(1) *"Many Put their Faith In Him. (vs. 30)*

Faith is the key to knowing God. There is such a thing as a shallow, short-lived faith. There were some Jews (vs. 31) who "believed him", but their belief was merely intellectual, lacking any personal commitment. It was a mere nominal belief that was short lived. There are still nominal disciples who merely give intellectual assent to the many statements of Jesus, without accepting the full implications for themselves.

True Faith means personal surrender to Christ, as a result of recognition of personal spiritual bankruptcy. Knowing that one cannot deliver himself from the slavery of sin, such a person trusts Christ alone for deliverance and life.

(2) *"Hold to my teachings". (b. 32; "Follow the Son". (vs. 12)*
Those who begin must follow through with Christ. To obtain life is wonderful, to maintain life is even more wonderful. To hold to Christ's teaching means listening, learning, researching, and obeying Christ.

"True discipleship, as Jesus says clearly in verse 32, means abiding in His Word, i.e., welcoming it, being at home with it, and living with it so continuously that it becomes part of the believer's life, a permanent influence and stimulus in every fresh advance in goodness and holiness. Christ's word is indistinguishable from Christ Himself. He is the Word. To abide in His Word is therefore to abide in Him, to be always within earshot of His voice; and when a believer abides in Christ, Christ abides in him, and Christ's life invigorates and sustains the believer's life." (Tasker; pg. 117)

B. MAN'S EXCITING FULFILLMENT.

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When man responds to God's offer of light and love, then man is filled with God's presence and power, and life becomes something of a romance. The fulfillment which the believer experiences, is most wonderful.

- (1) *"Never Walk in darkness, but have the light of life". (vs. 12)*

To walk in darkness is to walk in a strange land; to walk in the light is to walk in one's native land. Man is not meant to dwell in darkness; he is made to live in the light of God's love. To come to God's Light is to find oneself. "The more man becomes irradiated with Divinity, the more, not the less, truly he is man. The fullest Christian experience is simply the fullest life...Because it has always been in man to become the fulfilled man, which is the Christian, therefore for a man to have become a Christian is never wholly strange...Know Christ that you may know yourself...(To know Christ) is the true and natural destiny of all mankind."

"Does it mean everything for you if Truth and Courage and Unselfishness and Goodness are indeed natural to man and all Evil is unnatural and foreign? Know how native is goodness and how unnatural sin is to the soul of man". (The Light of the World; pgs. 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 23; By Phillips Brooks)

When one comes to Jesus the Light, he has the feeling of coming home to God and to himself.

- (2) *"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free". (vs. 32)* *"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed". (vs. 36)*

Notes Barclay, "Discipleship brings us four freedoms":

- (a) It brings us freedom from fear. The man who is a disciple never again has to walk alone. He walks for ever in the company of Jesus, and in that company fear is gone.
- (b) It brings freedom from self. Many a man fully recognized that his greatest handicap is his own self. And he may in despair cry out: 'I cannot change myself. I have tried, but it is impossible.' But the power and presence of Jesus can re-create a man until he is altogether new.
- (c) It brings freedom from other people. There are many whose lives are dominated by the fear of what other

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people may think and say. H.G. Wells once said that the voice of our neighbors sounds louder in our ears than the voice of God. The disciple is the man who has ceased to care what people say, because he thinks only of what God says.

- (d) It brings freedom from sin. Many a man has come to the stage when he sins, not because he wants to, but because he cannot help it. His sins have so mastered him that, try as he will, he cannot break away from them. Discipleship breaks the chains which bind us to them and enables us to be the persons we know we ought to be." (Barclay's John; pgs. 21, 22)

- (3) *"If a man keeps my word, he will never see death."* (vs. 51)

Notes Barclay "It is not physical life and physical death of which Jesus is thinking. He means that, for the man who fully accepts him, death has lost its finality; he has entered into a relationship with God which neither time nor eternity can sever. He goes, not from life to death, but from life to life; death is only the introduction: to the nearer presence of God". (John; pg. 33)

Death, for the believer, is like a sunrise, not a sunset! A new and glorious beginning, not an end! A victory, not a calamity! Physical life here is precious to the believer, but 'to die' is to gain heaven. "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain"!

CONCLUSION

Because Jesus has a unique relationship with the Heavenly Father, and claims the powers of deity ("I am the Light of the World"! "Before Abraham was, I am."). Jesus is able adequately to cope with man's problems of sin and self-centeredness. "The wages of sin is death". Man has sinned grievously. Therefore, man is under the sentence of death – eternal separation from God.

There is only one way to escape the penalty of sin – Surrender to Christ. If a sinner puts his faith and trust in Christ, and holds to Christ's teachings, and follows Christ, then he is able to escape death and darkness. To the one who follows Christ, he experiences God's promises and power: (1) He will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life; (2) He will know the truth and the truth will set him free; (3) He will never see death.

Have you come in faith to Jesus? Are you willing to hold to His teachings? Will you closely follow Christ the rest of your life? If so, you will wonderfully experience – 'The Light of the World'!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 10

(Based on John 8: 12-59)

1. **Because Jesus is the Light of the World, share briefly how Jesus gives enlightenment regarding God's nature and work, enlightenment regarding the Son's relationship to the Father, enlightenment regarding the nature of man's problems, enlightenment regarding the way of man's restoration and fulfillment.**
2. **From an examination of John 8: 14, 16, 18, 19, 26-29, 54-55, give a description of Jesus' unique relationship with His Heavenly Father.**
3. **Why was Jesus' claim to be the "Light of the World" such a 'Shocking' claim in the ears of the Jewish leaders? (Note Psalms 27: 1; Isaiah 60: 19; Job 29: 3, Micah 7: 8)**
4. **When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8: 58), what essentially was Jesus claiming to be? (Note Exodus 3: 13-14)**
5. **Why did the Jews of Jesus' time, place such great value on being descendants of Abraham? (Note John 8: 33)**

In what ways do some people today take refuge in their religious heritage or their national privilege as a basis for their spiritual security?

6. **According to the 8th chapter of John, a serious indictment comes to a man who has not accepted God's evaluation of corrupt human nature, but who instead is resting in a false security. As you note the following tragic consequences which come to a person who refuses to accept "The Light of the World" (Jesus), give your personal comments or illustrations:**
 - (1) **Ignorance of Jesus' Identity – "You have no idea where I come from or where I am going". (verse 14b)**
 - (2) **Worldly System of Judgment – "You judge by human standards". (vs. 15a)**
 - (3) **Lack of Personal Experience – "You do not know me or my Father". (vs. 19a)**
 - (4) **Controlled by Worldly Values – "You are from below...You are of the World". (vs. 23)**
 - (5) **Slave to Habitual Sinning – "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin". (vs. 34)**
 - (6) **Preoccupation with Selfish Interests – "No room for my word". (vs. 37)**
 - (7) **Satanic Source of Evil Actions – "You belong to your father the Devil". (vs. 44)**
 - (8) **Prospect of Spiritual Death – "If you do not believe that I am (the one I claim to be), you will indeed die in your sins". (vs. 24, 21)**

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7. According to John 8: 30-31, is it possible for one initially to 'believe' in Jesus in a shallow, intellectual way, without making a personal, volitional commitment to Christ as a 'way of life'?

8. According to John 8: 12, 31, what must one do to become a 'true disciple' of Jesus Christ?

Give your evaluation of the following description of 'True Discipleship'. (Is there some aspect of 'true discipleship' that you wish to add or to emphasize?) "True discipleship, as Jesus says clearly in verse 31, means abiding in His Word, i.e., welcoming it, being at home with it, and living with it so continuously that it becomes part of the believer's life, a permanent influence and stimulus in every fresh advance in goodness and holiness. Christ's word is indistinguishable from Christ Himself. He is the Word. To abide in His Word is therefore to abide in Him, to be always within earshot of His voice; and when a believer abides in Christ, Christ abides in Him, and Christ's life invigorates and sustains the believer's life."

9. Give your comments and responses to the following statements: "Truth and Courage and Unselfishness and Goodness are natural and native to man and all Evil is unnatural and foreign to man. When one comes to Jesus the Light, he has the feeling of coming home to God and to himself. To know Christ is to know oneself truly and to realize one's destiny fully"!

10. From your own personal experience (or from your observation of others) share illustrations which document the truth of the following statement: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8: 36) – free from fear, free from the bondage of self-centeredness, free from negative peer pressure, free from the 'chains' of sinful habits"!

11. According to John 8: 51, what attitude should a believer have regarding physical death?

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 11

SUBJECT: "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD!"

Scripture: *"1" I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." 6Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. 7Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved!^a He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. 11" I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^a; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one." (John 10: 1-13, 27-30)*

Text: *"I am the Good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10: 11)*

INTRODUCTION

"The Idea of God seeking man, rather than man seeking God, is found in no religion except Christianity." (George Allen Turner)

PROPOSITION

"He who follows the Good Shepherd shall have eternal life, and shall never perish, and is wonderfully safe and secure". (Verse 28)

- I. DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD**
 - A. SERVICE OF THE SHEPHERD**
 - B. SACRIFICE OF THE SHEPHERD**

- II. DESCRIPTION OF THE SHEEP**
 - A. CONDITION OF DISCIPLESHIP – CONTINUING OBEDIENCE.**
 - B. RESULTS OF DISCIPLESHIP – CONTINUES TO ENJOY ETERNAL LIFE**

CONCLUSION

Are you listening to the Shepherd's voice and following closely in His footsteps? If not, come to the Good Shepherd today!

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CHAPTER 11

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD!

INTRODUCTION

Notes Dr. George Allen Turner: "The earliest known examples of Christian art are those found in the catacombs of Rome. Here, in these underground corridors extending for hundreds of miles, the Christians buried their dead. In many instances after the body of the deceased was laid to rest, Christian faith was expressed by inscriptions and by paintings. From these we learn that the favorite representation of Christ was as the Good Shepherd. It is difficult to overestimate the influence exerted on the Christian Church by the Shepherd's Psalm and by the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. The idea of God seeking man, rather than man seeking God, is found in no religion except Christianity." (Aldersgate Biblical Series; pg. 103) – teacher's guide.

PROPOSITION:

John 10 is full of the beautiful imagery of the shepherd life. Jesus called Himself the 'Good Shepherd', and like the earthly shepherd (although in a much greater way), Jesus tends His flock and is willing even to lay down His life for the flock. Indeed, that willingness issued forth in actuality. Jesus laid down His life for the sheep – willingly.

To appreciate the character of the Good Shepherd, we must also look at other characters in the story – the sheep, the wolf.

"He who follows the Good Shepherd shall have eternal life, and shall never perish, and is wonderfully safe and secure". (Verse 28)

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In looking at the Good Shepherd, let us note: (1) The Service of the Shepherd, (2) The Sacrifice of the Shepherd.

A. SERVICE OF THE SHEPHERD

1. Jesus Is the Door For The Sheep – *"I am the door; by me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture". (vs. 9)*

Jesus is both the Door and the Shepherd; both the Source and the Sustainer of life; both the Entrance to God and the continuing Source of fellowship and life.

"These hillside sheep-folds were just open spaces enclosed by a wall. In them there was an opening by which the sheep came

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in and went out; but there was no door of any kind. What happened was that at night the shepherd himself lay down across the opening and no sheep could get out or in except over his body. In the most literal sense the shepherd was the door...To describe something of what that entrance to God means, Jesus uses a well-known Hebrew phrase. He says that through him 'we can go in and come out'. To be able to come and go unmolested was the Jewish way of describing a life that is absolutely secure and safe. When a man can go in and out without fear, it is because of Jesus and through Jesus Christ. If life is known to be in the hands of a God like that, the worries and the fears are gone." (Barclay's John 58, 59)

2. **Jesus Knows His Sheep By Name And Leads Them Gently. - "He Calls His Own Sheep By Name And Leads Them Out." (VS. 3)**

"In Palestine the shepherd went in front and the sheep followed. The shepherd went first to see that the path was safe, and sometimes the sheep had to be encouraged to follow." (Barclay, pg. 56) *"When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice".* (vs. 4) The Good Shepherd never asks the sheep to go where he does not first go. Nothing that you experience, but what God knows experientially. We, like sheep, are sometimes fearful and timorous – but Jesus inspires courage!

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep by name. This speaks of the personal feature of God's attention for each person. The uniqueness of each sheep is appreciated. Even descriptive names are applied to the sheep, such as 'Brown-Leg' or 'Black-ear'. "At the end of the day, when the sheep were going into the fold, the shepherd held his rod across the entrance, quite close to the ground; and every sheep had to pass under it. "As each sheep passed under, the shepherd quickly examined it to see if it had received any kind of injury throughout the day". (Barclay; 56) Such loving and personal care.

The shepherd was to go ahead of the sheep. He was their leader. "There was no sheep dogs in Palestine, and, when the shepherd wished to call back a sheep which was straying away, he fitted a stone into his sling and landed it just in front of the straying sheep's nose as a warning to turn back." (Ibid; 55)

So it is with the Good Shepherd. If one of the sheep (a believer) begins to stray, the Good Shepherd gently warns.

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The Good Shepherd seeks to get the attention of the sheep – reminding him that there is danger and that he belongs in the fold. Have you ever recognized any of God’s warnings in your life when you were straying from the fold of God? Heed the Good Shepherd’s warnings. Don’t stray from your loving shepherd. Guard against Drifting and Neglect! Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

3. Shepherd Desires To Give Good To The Sheep.

So it is with the Good Shepherd: *“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”*. (vs. 9, 10)

It is the intention that each person has a good and fulfilled life. Jesus has not come to destroy, but to save. He has come to heal, to give health. Jesus has come to lighten your burden, to resolve your guilt, to deepen your joy, to fill your void, and to speak peace to your troubled life.

The way of the transgressor is hard. The way of the Christian is comparatively easy. Jesus’ burden is our blessing; His yoke is our yearning; we are made for the Master as the fish is made for the water, as the bird is made for the air, as the bride is made for the bridegroom. Man’s stomach is made for food; man’s soul is made for the ‘Bread of Life’. The sheep are tenderly dealt with. The Shepherd is a Good Shepherd. God is committed to our Good!! All Good comes from God!

“Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd. Now in Greek, there are two words for good. There is agathos which simply describes the moral quality of a thing; there is kalos which means that in the goodness there is a quality of winsomeness which makes it lovely. When Jesus is described as the good shepherd, the word is kalos. In him there is more than efficiency and more than fidelity; there is loveliness. Sometimes in a village or town people speak about the good doctor. They are not thinking only of the doctor’s efficiency and skill as a physician; they are thinking of the sympathy and the kindness and the graciousness which he brought with him and which made him the friend of all. In the picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd there is loveliness as well as strength and power”. (Barclay; pg. 62)

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How strange that people would not come to Jesus, because of fear that Jesus would do them harm. Jesus is good – not evil! Come to the Good Shepherd!

B. SACRIFICE OF THE SHEPHERD

Said Jesus; "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father". (vs. 11, 17, 18)

"It is told that in the First World War there was a young French soldier who was seriously wounded. His arm was so badly smashed that it had to be amputated. He was a magnificent specimen of young manhood, and the surgeon was grieved that he must go through life maimed. So he waited beside his bedside to tell him the bad news when he recovered consciousness. When the lad's eyes opened, the surgeon said to him: 'I am sorry to tell you that you have lost your arm.' 'Sir', said the lad, 'I did not lose it; I gave it – for France'". (Barclay; pg. 67)

Notes Robert Shank: "Jesus declared that the Father would have concurred immediately in His withdrawal from the path to the cross, sending legions of angels to deliver Him, had He so chosen. He asserted that the fulfillment of the Scriptures with respect to His redemptive career as Messiah was to be determined by His personal decision alone. All therefore that Jesus endured and achieved in His redemptive career was purely voluntary on His part, rather than the inevitable unfolding of some inexorable divine decree. From Nazareth to Calvary, Jesus was under no constraint or coercion other than His own desire to fulfill the will of His Father, whose will was His meat and His delight.

"Jesus' fierce rebuke of well-meaning Peter for his suggestion that He avoid the sufferings and death which awaited Him at Jerusalem (Matthew 16: 23) reflects the persistence and power of the temptation which confronted Him all the way from Jordan to Gethsemane and the cross. Could Jesus actually have turned aside from His redemptive mission? Certainly the issue was not in doubt insofar as God was concerned. He had declared the outcome through His prophets of old, an outcome which He had foreseen from eternity. But it does not follow that God's foreknowledge, of itself, determined the outcome of Jesus' mission. Nor did God's eternal decree to give the Son, of itself, determine the outcome; for the decree of the Father was not a unilateral decree which left the Son no alternatives – a decree which imposed absolute necessity upon Jesus, depriving Him of all possibility of concurring with The Father's will on a purely voluntary basis. The Father chose to give the Son – even unto death; but unto death, only on condition

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that the Son should freely choose to die. (John 10: 17, 18) *"For this reason does my Father love me, because I lay down my life – that I may take it again. No one (neither the Father nor man) takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I received from my Father"*. The final decision was Christ's (as He affirmed in Matthew 26: 53). Victory in His redemptive mission was therefore actually, rather than merely hypothetically, contingent on Jesus' voluntary and uncoerced submission to the will of the Father". (Life In the Son; p. 247)

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE SHEEP

A. CONDITION OF DISCIPLESHIP–CONTINUING OBEDIENCE.

1. Listen for the Shepherd's Voice (vs. 3, 27)

To listen involves patience and willingness not to talk. Listening is more than mere hearing for the moment. Listening denotes a process of waiting upon God. One of the first verses I remember memorizing (a verse that my aunt wrote in the first Bible I owned) was: *"My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him"*. (Psalms 62: 5)

It was said of one great preacher, that while he was preaching, he would stop occasionally and listen to the voice of God before speaking the next sentence.

Notes Sangster, "We must attend the whispers of His grace...We have our part to play – small, but not unimportant. Should a millionaire give a fortune to a pauper, the pauper must take it. If the King grants a pardon to a felon, the felon must accept it. When a mortal goes to God for forgiveness and the Holy Spirit, he must receive the gift and, if he is wise, receive it daily for each new day as it comes. That is where discipline comes into the holy life: not the toilsome, straining, failing effort to be good; but the faithful attending on God to receive...The fact of one high moment cannot secure holiness for ever; it is a life of intimate relationship (which issues in mystic indwelling) and faithfulness shows itself in our consistency in attending...There can be no continuance of the holy life in the soul of any man who does not continually wait on God. Only those who attend the whispers of His grace can hear Him 'inly speak'". (Daily Readings; pg. 188)

Case for solitude – "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength". Are you regularly keeping your 'Quiet Time'?

2. Know Shepherds Voice (vs. 4) (vs. 5)

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Sheep will literally flee when a strange voice calls for them. The voice of the shepherd is well known to them. There are strange voices today, sounding fourth in the world, bidding for people to listen to them. The sheep have learned to distinguish between the true and the false. When someone says, "We have the latest revelation" the sheep know that this is a false voice, and believers flee from such deceivers. Said Jesus "*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*". (Matthew 10: 16) Said Paul, "*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*" (Acts 20: 29) Cults find members in ignorant Church Members!

Wolves steal and kill. "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full...The wolf attacks the flock and scatters it*". (VS. 10, 12b)

A wolf deceives and destroys. The sheep must avoid the wolf. The wolf destroys confidence and assurance in believers, claiming that believers cannot know if heaven will be their home, until they die. Other wolves are those who destroy the motivation for good works, saying that grace is all that is important, and that works are not important at all to God. There are other wolves who deny any absolute moral standards, claiming that each person must decide for himself what is right and wrong. They say that every man should do that which seems right in his own eyes. Legalism, antinomianism, and relative ethics – all of these are 'wolfish' doctrines. Wolves in Sheep's clothing! Test the Spirits – I John 4: 1-2; Wolves in sheep's clothing! Satan appears as an 'angel of light'.

3. Follow the Shepherd (vs. 4, 27)

Following Christ means obeying Christ and going where Christ wants him to go and doing what Christ wants him to do. This means Action. "No man who is not listening to His voice and following Him has warrant for assuming that he is one of Christ's sheep". (Shank; pg. 300) "*The faithfulness of the Good Shepherd to safeguard His sheep does not relieve them of the necessity of listening to His voice and following Him*". (John 10: 27-29) (Robert Shank; Life In The Son; pg. 361)

4. Recognition of Ownership by the Shepherd (vs. 12)

The sheep belong solely to the Shepherd. Christians belong solely to Christ. Says Paul, "*Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. Everything the sheep has, comes from the Good Shepherd. So it is true of the believer. In God, we live and move and have our being. Asks Paul of believers: "What have you that you haven't received"?* All

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one's time, talents, money, personality, and opportunities come from God.

In the Old Testament, God is pictured as possessing Israel, as a husband possesses a wife. *"God is a jealous God and desires men to worship only Him"*. (Exodus 34: 14) Says the believer: *"I am what I am, by the grace of God"*!

B. RESULTS OF DISCIPLESHIP – CONTINUES TO ENJOY ETERNAL LIFE

Says Jesus, concerning the sheep: *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish: no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand"*. (vs. 28, 29)

This is a marvelous promise that sheep shall never, never die or perish spiritually. Eternal life is guaranteed, but that guarantee is only for sheep. And what are sheep? Those who practice the habitual life of obedience, as outlined in verse 27. *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me"*. So those who continue to listen to God, and continue to follow Christ, and who thus have a personal knowledge of the Shepherd – for these there is wonderful safety and security. This abundant life and this eternal life are contingent upon these conditions. Trusting sheep – even though they may be very weak – are safe and secure sheep.

But the person who hears God's voice and listens to that voice and follows that voice, is assured of the glorious promises of abundant life here and eternal life hereafter.

Such a person is delivered from guilt, fears, inferiorities, self-centeredness, anger, resentments, which cause unhappiness and sorrows.

Life is not abundant and happy without Christ. "A woman, a bundle of misery, replied to E. Stanley Jones when he suggested that she surrender herself to God: "Why if I did that I would be at God's mercy." She felt that to surrender to God meant that God would take advantage of that surrender and have an opportunity to make her miserable, when she by her own self-will had made herself a bundle of misery"! (Victory through Surrender; pg. 399)

Some people think that fame and fortune would make them happy, but there is no happiness, outside of Christ. There is a former professional football player, Mr. Earlie Thomas whom I once met. He is a dedicated Christian. I visited with him in my office. Said he: "Some very famous professional athletes are very miserable. Take Joe Namath for instance. He is very

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popular. He made a million dollars last year. He has all the ladies he wants. He has his cars and his pads. He has anything money can buy. And he is idolized by many. And yet, Joe Namath is one of the most miserable guys that I know. I have spent time with him, and I know how miserable he is. Joe Namath actually envies the Christian professional athletes that he knows. He wishes that he could be like them. He knows something is missing in his life. But he is too proud to turn over to Christ. He is trying to make himself more acceptable to God, before coming to Christ. He is so miserable that he resorts to drinking”.

Said one person to E. Stanley Jones: “You are happy with Christ. Now show me how to be happy without Christ”. Said Jones, “I’m sorry, but there is no way that I know for one to be happy without Christ”.

One young girl who accepted Christ was so radiant that someone said to her: “You look as if you have swallowed sunshine”.

“The summons to rejoice is sounded no less than seventy times in the New Testament...Honest men at Pentecost thought that the apostles were drunk, and, whenever the living water has burst fresh from the rock again, the same exuberant gladness has been manifested”. (Sangster’s Daily Readings; pg. 144)

Joy is experienced, not by seeking it, but by seeking Christ and investing oneself in the interests of others. Joy comes by the realization of what God has done for one in the past, what God is doing in the present, and what God will do for one in the future.

Said E. Stanley Jones a veteran missionary at age 83: “Life to me has not been a struggle. It has been, and is, a Song. The struggle has been only when I have departed from His Way”.

CONCLUSION

Are you experiencing the Abundant Life for which you were created? Are you assured of eternal life? Are you listening to the Shepherd’s voice and following closely in His footsteps? If not, come to the Good Shepherd today! He desires nothing but good for you. He will not destroy you; He will save you.

Confess your sins; Believe in Jesus; Accept Him into your life; Begin today to follow Him and obey Him.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 11

1. Why do you think that the image of Jesus as 'The Good Shepherd' has had such a universally positive effect upon millions of people? Do you know of any religion, except Christianity, in which God is seeking man, rather than man seeking God?
2. What specific phrase in John 10: 9 describes the sheep's (believer's) absolute security and safety in Christ?
3. In an impersonal world where people given to the believer in John 10: 3?
4. Does the 'Good Shepherd' (Jesus) ever ask His sheep (believers) to go where He Himself does not go? (Note John 10: 4)
5. Have you ever recognized any of the Good Shepherd's warnings in your life when you were 'straying' from the fold of God? In what forms do God's warnings often come to us?
6. According to John 10: 10, what motive does the Good Shepherd have in His responses to the sheep? From your own personal life, share a brief testimony that illustrates the truth of the following statements: "Jesus has not come to destroy, but to save. He has come to heal, to give health. Jesus has come to lighten your burden, to resolve your guilt, to deepen your joy, to fill your void, and to speak peace to your troubled life".
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "The way of the transgressor is hard. The way of the Christian is comparatively easy". (Note Proverbs 13: 15; Psalms 107: 17; Romans 2: 9; Matthew 11: 28-30; Hebrews 11: 25; Deuteronomy 6: 2; I Peter 1: 8; 2 Corinthians 9: 14-15)
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "As the fish is made for the water, the bird for the air, the stomach for food, the mind for thoughts, the bride for the bridegroom, so my soul is made for God! The Soul is restless until it rests in God"!
9. According to John 10: 11, 17, 18, was Jesus 'forced' by His Heavenly Father to come to earth to die on a cross for lost humanity, or was Jesus' 'redemptive career' on earth purely voluntary on His part?
10. From a study of John 10: 3, 4, 5, 12, 27, how can one accurately describe – in terms of actions and attitudes – the characteristics of Christ's 'Sheep'?
11. How would you describe some of the 'wolves' today which seek to deceive and to destroy Christ's 'Sheep'? (Notes John 10: 10, 12; Acts 20: 29; 1 John 4: 1-2)

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12. **As you consider John 10: 27, tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "No man who is not listening to His voice and following Him has warrant for assuming that he is one of Christ's sheep. The faithfulness of the Good Shepherd to safeguard His sheep does not relieve them of the necessity of listening to His voice and following Him".**
13. **According to John 10:27-29, is a believer (sheep) 'Conditionally' or 'Unconditionally' Secure? Can one rightly claim the 'Promises' of John 10: 28-29, without also meeting the 'Conditions' of John 10: 27?**
14. **Give your personal insights, comments, and responses (or reactions) to the following statements, regarding John 10: 27-29. "We must carefully distinguish between the certainty of God's promises and His infinite power on the one hand, and the weakness and variableness of man's will on the other. If man falls at any stage in his spiritual life, it is not from want of divine grace, nor from the overwhelming power of adversaries, but from his neglect to use that which he may or may not use. We cannot be protected against ourselves in spite of ourselves. He who ceases to hear and to follow is thereby shown to be no true believer".**
15. **Share what you would say to a person who would make the following request of you: "You are happy with Christ. Now show me how to be happy without Christ".**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 12

SUBJECT: "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE!"

Scriptures: *¹Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." ⁴When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." ⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. ⁷Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. ²¹"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ,^[a] the Son of God, who was to come into the world." ³²When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping; he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead** ³⁸Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹"Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." ⁴⁰Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." **The Plot to Kill Jesus** ⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him." (John 11: 1-7, 20-27, 32-45)*

Text: *"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live".
(John 11: 25)*

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps of all mysteries, the mystery of death is the greatest. Both children and philosophers ask the same question, "What is death and what happens after one dies"?

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PROPOSITION

Christ won the ultimate victory for mankind – Victory over death, man’s last enemy! He who puts his total trust in Jesus will never die. Physical death is only a bridge to usher one into the nearer presence of God.

- I. COMPANION DURING CALM. (vs. 1-3)**

- II. COMFORTER DURING CRISIS. (vs. 17-38)**
 - A. JESUS SHARES ENNOBLING PRESENCE.**
 - B. JESUS SHARES HEARTFELT SYMPATHY.**
 - C. JESUS SHARES ENLIGHTENING HOPE.**

- III. CONQUEROR DURING CALAMITY**
 - A. JESUS SHARES PURPOSE DURING CALAMITY. (vs. 4, 15, 40-42)**
 - B. JESUS SHARES POWER DURING CALAMITY.**

CONCLUSION

Come to Jesus today! Let Him resurrect you to new life – abundant life here and eternal life hereafter! Let Jesus touch you with His miracle touch. Like Lazarus, come forth from death to new life – the greatest of all miracles!

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CHAPTER 12

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE!

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps of all mysteries, the mystery of death is the greatest. Years ago one of my young daughters asked me a blunt question: "Daddy, how do you die"?

Both children and philosophers ask the same question, "What is death and what happens after one dies"?

"One of the strangest things in Scripture is the fact that the saints of the Old Testament had practically no belief in any real life after death...all alike went there (to steal) and they lived a vague, shadowy, strengthless, joyless, ghostly kind of life. This is the belief of by far the greater part of the Old Testament. After death came the land of silence and of forgetfulness, where the shades of men were separated alike from men and from God". (Barclay's John; pg. 92)

Jewish thought was vague and pessimistic regarding the hereafter, and the subject of death has been described in rather terrifying terms by even Christian writers. Some have described death as "The gloomy portal", or "the icy river", or the "bitter journey".

Suspicion, fear, pessimism and despair have been men's reactions to death. However, let us quickly acknowledge that "We may search our New Testaments in vain for any of the gloomy graveyard images, the shadow, the darkness, the pains, the bitterness of death, which still appear in many of our Christian hymns. 'To depart and be with Christ, which is far better', 'to sleep in Christ', to be 'forever with the Lord' – these are the radiant certainties of the New Testament". (Phillips' "Good News", pg. 197)

PROPOSITION

What can we learn from a study of the eleventh Chapter of John? We can learn that Jesus is totally adequate for all circumstances – for Christ won the ultimate victory for mankind – victory over death, man's last enemy! He who puts his total trust in Jesus will never die. Physical death is only a bridge to usher one into the nearer presence of God. Think of Jesus as your friend, in three different ways: (1) Compassion, (2) Comforter, and (3) Conqueror.

I. COMPANION DURING CALM (vs. 1-3)

"It is one of the most precious things in the world to have a house and a home into which one can go at any time and find rest and understanding and peace and love. That was doubly true for Jesus, for He had no home of His own; He had nowhere to lay His head. (Luke 9: 58) In the home at Bethany he had just such a place. There

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were three people who loved him; and there he could find rest from the tension of life". (Barclay's John; pg. 80)

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus made a home for Jesus. Their warm hospitality found a warm reception in Jesus' heart. They spent hours talking and fellowshiping with Jesus. Jesus was always welcome in their home. Do you spend much time with Jesus on a daily basis? He is your best friend!

"Brother Lawrence, a French monk who lived some centuries ago, spent ten years in rugged, rigid devotional discipline; then, he found himself released to the ever-present Christ. Always He was with Him, Brother Lawrence said, just as much in the kitchen of the monastery (where he did the pots and pans) as at the Blessed Sacrament". (Begin with God; pamphlet by Don Demaray)

Susanna Wesley had a prayer: "Help me, Lord, to remember that religion is not to be confined to the church or closet, nor exercised only in prayer and meditation, but that everywhere I am in Thy presence". (Barclay's Matthew; (pg. 180)

Remember in our homes:

**'Jesus is the unseen Guest at Every Table,
The Silent Listener to every Conversation'.**

Does Jesus feel welcome in your heart and home, like He felt welcome in the heart and home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus? Is Jesus your daily companion during the calm times of life, in order that He might be your comforter during the crisis times of life?

"The lesson for us is that if we welcome the presence and fellowship of Jesus in normal times, it will not be difficult to turn to Him during a critical time. People who do not bother to welcome Jesus but pursue their own ways, however, do not have a place to turn for divine help when trouble finds them. It is good to have fellowship with Christ as an end in itself, not as means to an end". (Aldersgate Biblical Series; John; pg. 116)

Jesus wants to be your companion, not just when you are in trouble, but also during the normal routine. Serve Him daily because of His wonderful Self, and you will find Him also a 'very present help in times of trouble'. Don't try to use Jesus just for a crisis, but enjoy Jesus in daily fellowship. Jesus wants to be your daily companion. Come to know, to enjoy His wonderful friendship daily!

Would Jesus feel welcome in your home? If Jesus came to your home today, would he be met with a warm welcome, or would you first have to hide something before you bid Him entry?

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Jesus wishes your companionship daily! He wants to share all of your life with you! Both your joys and your sorrows! Most of life is routine. Do you take Jesus with you into your daily life, or do you use Jesus simply for help in crisis?

Jesus wants to feel at home in your life! He wants you to see Him in the commonplace events of life – the smile of a child, the glow of a rainbow, the fragrance of the flower.

Jesus wants to be your constant companion – during devotions and during work, during the day and during the night, during the routine times and during the special times, during the calm and during the crisis.

II. COMFORTER DURING CRISIS (vs. 17-38)

A. JESUS SHARES ENNOBLING PRESENCE

There were “two friends who served together in the First World War. One of them was wounded and left lying helpless and in pain in no-man’s-land. The other, at peril of his life, crawled out to help his friend; and, when he reached him the wounded man looked up and said simply: ‘I knew you would come’. The simple fact of human need brings Jesus to our side in the twinkling of an eye”. (Barclay’s John; pg. 81)

Because Mary and Martha trusted Jesus during the calm times of life, they could trust Him during the crises times of life. Jesus’ very presence gave calm and solace during a critical time.

And so it should be with every Christian. The presence of a Christian during a crisis situation ought to be ennobling and strengthening.

The word for ‘Holy Spirit’ is ‘paraklatos’ – meaning ‘The one who is called along beside another to help him cope effectively and courageously with life’.

Jesus’ very presence was comforting during this crisis!

B. JESUS SHARES HEARTFELT SYMPATHY

***“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him”!* (John 11: 33-36)**

**“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has a part”.**

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"When Jesus saw her weeping, and when he saw the Jews who had come with her weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit so that an involuntary groan burst from him, and he trembled with deep emotion". (Barclay's Translation)

**"There is never a Burden that He doth not bear,
There is never a Sorrow that He doth not share".**

"It was impossible that the Son of Man should stand in the close presence of this one sorrow, and not feel all the great sea of sorrows, of which this was a single wave, beating upon His heart out of all the lands and all the ages"! (Brooks; 'New Starts In Life; pg. 234)

"Though living in this kind of a world is costing us pain, it is costing God more." (Christ and Human Suffering; pg. 194) The Gospel has the cross at the very foundation, and the cross is the outward revelation of the cross which has always been at the heart of God. Jesus reveals that God is not coldly detached from human suffering, for everything Jesus was, God has always been. The greatest of all realities is the reality which Jesus revealed – namely, at the heart of the Universe is a God who cares! When Jesus wept, God wept!

Because Jesus shared the suffering of men, God has always shared the suffering of mankind! "He is cold in the chilled bodies of the poor, he is lonely in the outcaste, is hurt in the guilt of the sinner, is part and parcel of every life". (Ibid; Jones; pg. 161)

C. JESUS SHARES ENLIGHTENING HOPE.

"Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this"? (vs. 23-26)

Jesus kept Mary and Martha from throwing away hope. Faith in the wonderful presence and power of Jesus kept hope alive in the midst of darkness and gloom.

One of the greatest services a friend can render to one whose heart is breaking with sorrow, is to offer hope. Hope that is not an illusion or wishful thinking, but hope that is founded on an enduring foundation. The only foundation for hope is ultimately the Resurrection! When Jesus offered Himself as the Foundation of Hope, He was offering a reliable and proven foundation. Soon Jesus would demonstrate the reality upon which the hope was built – the bodily resurrection of Lazarus, which would serve as a foreshadowing of His own Resurrection! (When we share with grieving

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hearts, we can share the hope that sorrowing ones will be with their loved ones again – because of the resurrection).

II. CONQUEROR DURING CALAMITY

Throughout Jesus' life, He many times proved to be the mighty conqueror during life's calamities. Many of Jesus' miracles are demonstrations of this reality. When He calmed the angry waves of the sea – 'Peace Be Still' – He showed Himself conqueror over nature. When He cast out demons, He showed Himself conqueror over the evil realm. When He healed the sick, He showed Himself to be conqueror over human illness and disease. Now Jesus was ready to show an even greater power – power over death.

The calamity was Lazarus' death. The victory was Lazarus' resurrection – which victory was a foreshadow of Jesus' own victory over death through His own Bodily Resurrection. Soon Christ Himself would be "*risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept*". I Corinthians 15: 20) Lazarus' resurrection points to Christ's resurrection which makes possible our own personal resurrection!

A. JESUS SHARES PURPOSE DURING CALAMITY. (vs. 4, 15, 40-42)

God has a purpose to accomplish through every calamity which He allows to come to a Christian. We are not saying that God causes the calamity; but we are saying that God wishes to use every calamity, in a believer's life to accomplish a certain Purpose.

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. (vs. 41, 42)

There were at least two purposes to be accomplished in this calamity:

(1) To Show Jesus' Victory over Death.

Have you ever asked the question: "Is life basically Joy or basically Sorrow, basically positive or basically negative, basically hope or basically despair, basically victory or basically defeat"?

"Shall life be wretchedness, with strange, unaccountable, tantalizing, exasperating flashes of happiness flung here and there upon its darkness, making its great stretches only darker? Or shall life be one great deep stream of joy, ever and anon darkening and ensnaring itself in suffering, but always unsnarling and brightening itself again, and always keeping its

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great course unturned, its great song unsilenced, below every hindrance or discord which may disturb its bosom? Which of these two is Christ's idea of human life? Can there be any doubt? Consider the very names He loves to bear. He is Jesus. He is the Saviour. He is Christ, the anointed one. His work is redemption. What do those words mean? Do they not of necessity involve the truth that in behind and up above and down below all life there is one great unchanged purpose of good..." (Phillips Brooks; *New Starts In Life*; pg. 239)

The Resurrection (of Lazarus, and more importantly His own) showed the triumph of Life over death, of joy over sorrow, of hope over despair, of victory over defeat.

Darkness holds sway for two day's, but the third day is "Resurrection Day"! Death gives way to life, defeat gives way to victory, evil gives way to righteousness – all because of Jesus' Resurrection!

'Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus, My Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, My Lord"!

God's power was demonstrated and His mercy manifested!
God was glorified!

(2) To Strengthen Believer's Faith Through Calamity.

Mary and Martha did not get the victory that they at first asked for – saving Lazarus from dying. "*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*". (vs. 21)

It seemed that Jesus was too late – but He wasn't too late, according to God's Timetable! God could accomplish a greater miracle through Lazarus' death than through Lazarus' physical healing. Lazarus' death provided Jesus an opportunity to perform a great miracle, the result of which would buttress the believers even more firmly in their faith.

Many times, faith has greater opportunity to grow during crisis and calamity than during calm. The face of God is many times seen most clearly through tear-filled eyes.

Sir John Reith once said, "I do not like crisis; but I like the opportunities which they supply". (Barclay's John; pg. 87)

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B. Jesus Shares Power During Calamity.

"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go". (vs. 43, 44)

This Resurrection account teaches two kinds of resurrection – physical resurrection and spiritual resurrection.

(1) Spiritual Resurrection

He who believes on Jesus has new life. He is raised to a new level of living. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He who is in union with Christ, enjoys the new quality of life. He who is in Christ Jesus, is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold everything is becoming new. (II Corinthians 5: 17)

"In Christ, Abstract truths are personified, as here. Jesus not only gives the bread of life but is that bread; he not only brings the light, he is the light; he not only tells the truth, he is the truth; he not only provides life, he is life". (Turner's commentary on John; pgs. 232, 244)

The man who is insensitive to the feelings of others can be resurrected to new sensitivities! The man who is involved in dishonesties can be resurrected to new honour! The man who has become hopeless and despairing can be resurrected to new hope and courage!

The power that raised Lazarus from the dead, is the same power that can raise men who are 'dead in trespasses and sins'. Resurrection power can make bad men good, and weak men strong! Has resurrection power touched you yet?

**'He speaks, and listening to his voice,
New Life the dead receive.**

(2) Physical Resurrection and Immortal Life.

Notes B.B. Warfield: The raising of Lazarus thus becomes, not an isolated marvel, but...a decisive instance and open symbol of Jesus' conquest of death and hell...Not in cold unconcern, but in flaming wrath against the foe, Jesus smites in our behalf. He has not only saved us from the evils which oppress us; he

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has felt for and with us in our oppression, and under the impulse of these feelings has wrought out our redemption".

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die".
(John 11: 26) Notes Phillips: "Can these words possibly bear any other interpretation – that death as an experience does not exist at all for the man whose life is entrusted to Christ"?
(Good News; pg. 196)

"As members of the Christ of God all men shall be raised to life, each in his proper order, with Christ the very first and after him all who belong to him when he comes". (I Corinthians 15: 23; Phillips)

When Jesus arose, he was seen and known. We, too, in heaven will have identity. "Because I live, ye shall live also'. He pioneered the way for us. His Resurrection made clear to us what Christian immortality is – not the vague wandering of lonely and orphaned spirits, floating somewhere between earth and heaven – but the continuation of ourselves, in communion with Him and with one another. We are not a drop that falls into the sea of being and is lost in it; we are individual and responsible souls that return to their Creator. Christ's Resurrection has immeasurably strengthened our faith in the resurrection of the human soul". (Shoemaker; Twenty Centuries; vol. 11, pg. 83)

CONCLUSION:

If you believe (and continue to believe) in Jesus, you will Never – No Never – Die!

Come to Jesus today! Let Him resurrect you to new life – abundant life here and eternal life hereafter! Let Jesus touch you with His miracle touch. Like Lazarus, come forth from death to new life – the greatest of all miracles!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 12

1. **Tell if you have ever seriously asked yourself the question “What is death and what happens after I die”?**
2. **Describe what the general understanding of Jewish people was in Old Testament times, previous to the coming of Christ, and contrast this understanding of death to the conviction of believers following the resurrection of Jesus.**

What phrases from the New Testament epistles accurately (and joyfully) describe death for those who have placed their faith in Christ.

3. **Share briefly from your own life a time when Jesus was unto you: (1) A Companion; (2) A Comforter; (3) A Conqueror, (all of which is demonstrated in John 11).**
4. **Do you really believe that Jesus wishes your companionship daily? Do you spend much time (Quiet Times) with Jesus on a daily basis? If Jesus came to your home today, would he be met with a warm welcome, or would you first have to hide something before you bid Him entry? Do you take Jesus with you into your daily life, or do you use Jesus simply for help in crisis?**
5. **Are you learning to “practice the presence of Jesus” in your life, to see Him in the smile of a child, the glow of a rainbow, the fragrance of the flower, to become more sensitive to His presence during your devotions and during your work, during the calm and during the crisis of life?**
6. **Does Jesus feel welcome in your heart and home, like He felt welcome in the heart and home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus?**
7. **Is Jesus your daily companion during the calm times of life, in order that He might be your comforter during the crisis times of life?**
8. **Do you think some people look at Jesus as a “means to an end” rather than as an “end within Himself”? Does Jesus want to be your companion, not just when you are in trouble, but also during the normal routine? (Note: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus often enjoyed Jesus in their home during calm times, long before they desperately needed Jesus during the crisis time when Lazarus died).**
9. **During your personal crisis, have you found that the presence of an understanding and sympathetic friend brought you solace and encouragement and hope and comfort?**
10. **When the Holy Spirit is described as ‘paraklatos’ (a Greek term), what actually does this mean, in terms of the ministry of the Holy Spirit?**

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11. According to John 11: 33-36, how did Jesus react to the broken-hearted sisters of Lazarus? What do you think should be the reaction of Godlike persons who are in the midst of sorrowing persons?
12. Give your response (interpretation) to the following question regarding the sorrowing Christ: "It was impossible that the Son of Man stand in the close presence of this one sorrow, and not feel all the great sea of sorrows, of which this was a single wave, beating upon His heart out of all the lands and all the ages"!
13. Tell if your understanding of God is reflected in the following statement: "Though living in this kind of a world is costing us pain, it is costing God more. The cross of Christ is the outward revelation of the cross which has always been at the heart of God".
14. Before Jesus demonstrated the greatest of all power – the power to raise a man from the dead – what were other ways Jesus had demonstrated His power, earlier in His earthly ministry?
15. As regards your own life and future, what personal application can you make as a result of your examination of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11?
16. Do you believe that God has a purpose to accomplish through every calamity which God has allowed to come into your life, that God can use every calamity to accomplish a certain purpose in your life?
17. Tell why you seriously believe that life is basically Joy or basically Sorrow, basically positive or basically negative, basically hope or basically despair, basically victory or basically defeat?
18. Tell why you believe or disbelieve the declaration of the following statement: "Many times, faith has greater opportunity to grow during crisis and calamity than during calm".
19. Because Jesus declared (and proved) that He is "the Resurrection and the Life", how has he demonstrated (and proved) His Resurrection Power in your personal life and relationships?
20. Is it a denial of reality, or is it a statement of Biblically – based truth to make the following declaration? – "Death as an experience does not exist at all for the man whose life is entrusted to Christ". (*"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die".* John 11: 26)
21. Jesus declared "Because I live, ye shall live also"! Do you believe that, as a believer in the "hereafter", you will truly live, that is, that you will continue to enjoy in a greater way your personal identity as a human creature, and that you will enjoy the

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individuals whom you loved on earth, as well as experiencing the indescribable joy of becoming a friend to countless other saints in your heavenly home?

- 22. What enduring message in John 11 can you, as a believer, share with one whose heart is broken because of the loss of a loved one?**
- 23. Tell with what degree of conviction you agree with the following statements: "Darkness holds sway for two days, but the third day is Resurrection Day! Death gives way to life, defeat gives way to victory, evil gives way to righteousness – all because of Jesus' Resurrection"!**
- 24. What power alone is capable of making bad men good, despairing men hopeful, guilty men free, deceitful men honest? In terms of both physical and spiritual resurrection, what does the raising of Lazarus from the dead symbolize?**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 13

SUBJECT: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE!

Scripture: *1"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God^a; trust also in me. 2In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4You know the way to the place where I am going." Jesus the Way to the Father 5Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you really knew me, you would know^a my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (John 14: 1-7)*

Text: *"I am the Way, the truth, and the Life". (John 14: 6)*

INTRODUCTION

Because Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, Jesus commands all persons to love Him with all of their soul, mind, and heart.

PROPOSITION

Jesus is totally adequate for every need which man has. He strengthens the Will, He answers the question of the Mind; He speaks assurance to the Heart.

- I. I AM THE WAY (Gives Power To The Will)
 - A. JESUS SAVES FROM LIFE OF SIN
 - B. JESUS BREAKS HARMFUL HABITS
 - C. JESUS EMPOWERS FOR SERVICE

- II. I AM THE TRUTH (Gives Answers To The Mind)
 - A. JESUS ANSWERS MAN'S QUESTIONS REGARDING LIFE AND DEATH
 - B. JESUS ANSWERS MAN'S QUESTIONS REGARDING SALVATION AND ACCEPTANCE BY GOD

- III. I AM THE LIFE (Gives Assurance To The Heart)
 - A. JESUS GIVES ASSURANCE DURING MAN'S FEARS
 - B. JESUS GIVES ASSURANCE DURING MAN'S LONELINESS

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CONCLUSION

Do you need a new strength? Jesus is the Way to strength and power. Do you need the answers to life's mysteries? Jesus is the Truth who has come directly from God's bosoms to reveal reality. Do you need assurance in the face of life's fears and life's loneliness? Jesus is the Life. Come to Jesus!

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CHAPTER 13

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE!"

INTRODUCTION:

Today we look at another one of great 'I Ams'. Said Jesus: *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"*. This is a claim to be God. All the claims Jesus made were claims of deity. Jesus, by making these claims, definitely claimed d to be God Incarnate!

Jesus is either a liar, lunatic, or Lord! "Someone who lived as Jesus lived, taught as Jesus taught and died as Jesus died could not have been a liar." (Evidence That Demands A Verdict; pg. 110) Further, someone whose intellectual and moral nature and teachings were so sound and penetrating is not subject to self-delusion and madness.

If Jesus was not a liar, or a lunatic, then Jesus must have been Lord. There is no other honest option. Writes C.S. Lewis: "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to". (Ibid; 108)

Jesus is God. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jesus commanded man to love Him with his soul. The soul is the source of man's will. To love God with one's soul is to respond with the will, made possible because 'Jesus is the Way'. That is, Jesus gives power to the will of man.

Jesus is totally adequate for every need which man has. He strengthens the Will, He answers the question of the Mind; He speaks assurance to the Heart.

Jesus commanded man to love Him with the heart. The heart is the center of emotions, and the vehicle of feeling. To love God with our heart is to respond to God with all of one's emotions and affections, made possible because 'Jesus Is the Life'. That is, Jesus gives assurance to the heart of man.

PROPOSITION:

Jesus is totally adequate for every need which man has. He strengthens the Will, He answers the question of the Mind; He speaks assurance to the Heart.

I. I AM THE WAY (Gives Power To The Will)

A. JESUS SAVES FROM LIFE OF SIN

Without God's empowering, man is weak. ¹⁴*We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.* ¹⁵*I do not understand what*

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I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[a] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. (Romans 7: 14-19) Only the Holy Spirit can “break the power of cancelled sin” and set the prisoner free! The bondage of sin is broken by Christ’s mighty power. Jesus saves us from sin, not in our sins. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[a] because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1: 21)

Man cannot convert himself, as much as he needs or desires conversion. But what man is unable to do because of a weak or corrupted will, The Mighty Christ Can Do!

B. JESUS BREAKS HARMFUL HABITS

Only Christ can empower the weakened will of man, to enable man to break harmful habits. The fact that God can make bad men good, is evidence of the power of Christianity.

There was “a workman who was chaffed by his workmates because he lived a life of strict sobriety, never gambled, and always spoke of the Bible with reverence. ‘If you believe in the Bible’, they said, ‘you must believe that water was turned into wine’. ‘I believe more than that’, he said. His mind went back to his evil early days and his pre-conversion years. ‘I have seen’, he said, ‘Beer turned into furniture. Betting-slips turned into food. I have seen a woman, miserable because she was married to a gambling addict, made radiantly and permanently happy because her man was changed before her eyes. Of course I believe in miracles’”. (Daily Readings; pg. 99; Sangster)

Have you heard of the miracles of immediate deliverance from drugs without even withdrawal symptoms, in the lives of some of the youth in today’s ‘Jesus’ Movement’? Jesus is the Way to deliverance!

I knew of one old gentleman who had smoked most of his life, who knelt at an altar of prayer to receive Christ, and he not only received Christ, but he received an immediate deliverance from the appetite to smoke! That miracle may not always happen at the time of conversion, but God will perform that great of a miracle in each of our lives, if we allow Him.

I heard of one student who had much difficulty developing the habit of regular disciplined study. She prayed for a will strong enough to overcome her complacency regarding study habits. God strengthened that will and she became a good student through disciplined study habits.

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God will give you a new strength to break old habits and to form new and helpful habits. Jesus is the Way to forming new habits in life!

C. JESUS EMPOWERS FOR SERVICE

Jesus can strengthen the will of the Christian to enable him to accomplish great tasks for the Master. Said Jesus, *"I will tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. If you love me, you will do what I command"*. (John 14: 12-14, NIV)

Said Paul, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Philippians 4: 13) *"For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants"*. (Philippians 2: 13)

What is it that has enabled some men to do such great exploits for God? It is God's mighty energy, working within. Spirit-possessed people are power-possessed people.

Wrote Paul, *"This is my work, and I can do it only because Christ's mighty energy is at work within me"*. (Colossians 1: 29)

The physical vitality of Paul was received from none other than the indwelling Christ! Paul experienced unbelievable hardships, and yet Paul experienced the mighty energy of Christ working within him, throughout his entire life. Jesus was the source of indwelling power for service. Jesus is the way to physical vitality!

Note an example from Paul's life. Acts 14: 19, 20 says, *"¹⁹Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe"*. Notes E.S. Jones, *"Paul was dragged out of the city like a dead dog, and when they stood around him he rose up and went on his own steam into the city. Note he didn't go away into hiding to lick his wounds, he went straight back into the city where he had been stoned, really asking for more...Signs on the expressways say, 'No stopping except for repairs'. But Paul didn't even stop for repairs. For evidently he had a built-in repair shop – the Holy Spirit.. The Holy Spirit was quickening his moral body...Dr. Cannon, the great physiologist, says, 'All the healing forces are laid up within the body ready to go into operation when needed'. ...No need to lay up long periods for repairs, for the Spirit quickens the mortal body as you go"*. (Word Became Flesh; pg. 229)

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It was the all-sufficient grace of God that enabled Wesley to achieve such success. "John Wesley preached 42,000 sermons. He averaged 4,500 miles a year. He rode (by horse) 60 to 70 miles a day and preached three sermons a day on an average. When he was 83 he wrote in his diary, 'I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or travelling'". (Barclay's I Corinthians, pg. 289)

"The saint never gives up. He goes on serving, loving, and helping...He aches for souls. Neither indifference, nor slander, nor injury, can stop him. He does not make a motive of gratitude. His great motive is his utter love of God...Men have wondered what kept John Wesley in the saddle for fifty-three years...They have wondered what kept David Livingstone in the jungle of Africa for thirty-three years, and Peter Claver tending the poor slaves at Cartagena for thirty-eight years. None of these men retired. Death alone ended their labours..." (Daily Readings; pg. 134; Sangster)

Jesus gives the daily renewal and physical and spiritual vitality to continue to follow Him throughout an entire lifetime. Jesus is the Way to a lifetime of fruitful, faithful service.

II. I AM THE TRUTH (Gives Answers To The Mind)

John 14: 17, 26, speaks of 'The Spirit of Truth'. "²⁶*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*". (John 14: 26)

A. JESUS ANSWERS MAN'S QUESTIONS REGARDING LIFE AND DEATH

Do you want to know the truth about life and death? Ask Jesus, He alone fully understands life and death. "*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*". (vs. 1, 2)

Jesus does not want our hearts to be troubled about the hereafter. The solution is to believe in Jesus who gives us inside knowledge of God. Jesus is the Son, so everything Jesus was, God has always been.

Jesus is preparing Heaven for man's dwelling place for ever. In Jesus, you are safe in life and in death.

B. JESUS ANSWERS MAN'S QUESTIONS REGARDING SALVATION AND ACCEPTANCE BY GOD

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew

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us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father"? (vs. 7-9)

No man can come to the Father except through the Son. To see and to know Jesus is to see and to know God the Father.

"E. Stanley Jones has told a story of a little boy who stood before a picture of his absent father, and then turned to his mother and said wistfully, 'I wish Father would step out of the picture'. That little boy expressed, in his own way, the deepest hope of the most devout souls who lived before Christ – that God the Creator would become real to mankind"! (Sangster's Special Day Sermons; pg. 17}

Notes Stangster, "Stars are lovely to look at – but they can't love. Flowers are beautiful – but they have no heart...The flowers don't mind. They will come to the wedding or the funeral. It is all the same to them. They are beautiful, but they are not personal. The mountains are majestic, but there is no comfort in their cold hearts. Oh, for a warm heart in the universe! If only the Father would step out of the picture. Listen! Listen! He stepped out of the picture. He stepped out at Bethlehem. Here is the glorious truth of it: 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him'". (Sangster's Special Day Sermons; pg.18)

The truth concealed became the Truth Revealed. Jesus is the Truth Personified, who stepped out of the very bosom of God to reveal the truth about reality. He who accepts Jesus accepts Truth and accepts God. It is in the Incarnate Son that man finds salvation and acceptance by God. "No man cometh unto the Father by me". (vs., 6b)

III. I AM THE LIFE (Gives Assurance To The Heart)

Jesus, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, comforts and assures the human heart. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever...I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you". (vs. 16, 18)

A. JESUS GIVES ASSURANCE DURING MAN'S FEARS

There is fear regarding the unknown future. We see the future as if we were looking through a glass darkly, but Jesus assures us of his continuing companionship, and his future promises. "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. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know...Peace I leave

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with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". (vs. 3, 4, 27)

There is fear regarding death. Jesus' reassuring words are these: "Because I live, ye shall live also". (vs. 19) There is an angel who will lead the faithful gently home.

B. JESUS GIVES ASSURANCE DURING MAN'S LONELINESS

Because the Christian is never alone, he need never feel lonely. The intimate companionship and indwelling of Jesus through the Holy Spirit is the guarantee against loneliness. "At the day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him...Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and we will make our abode with him". (vs. 20, 21, 23)

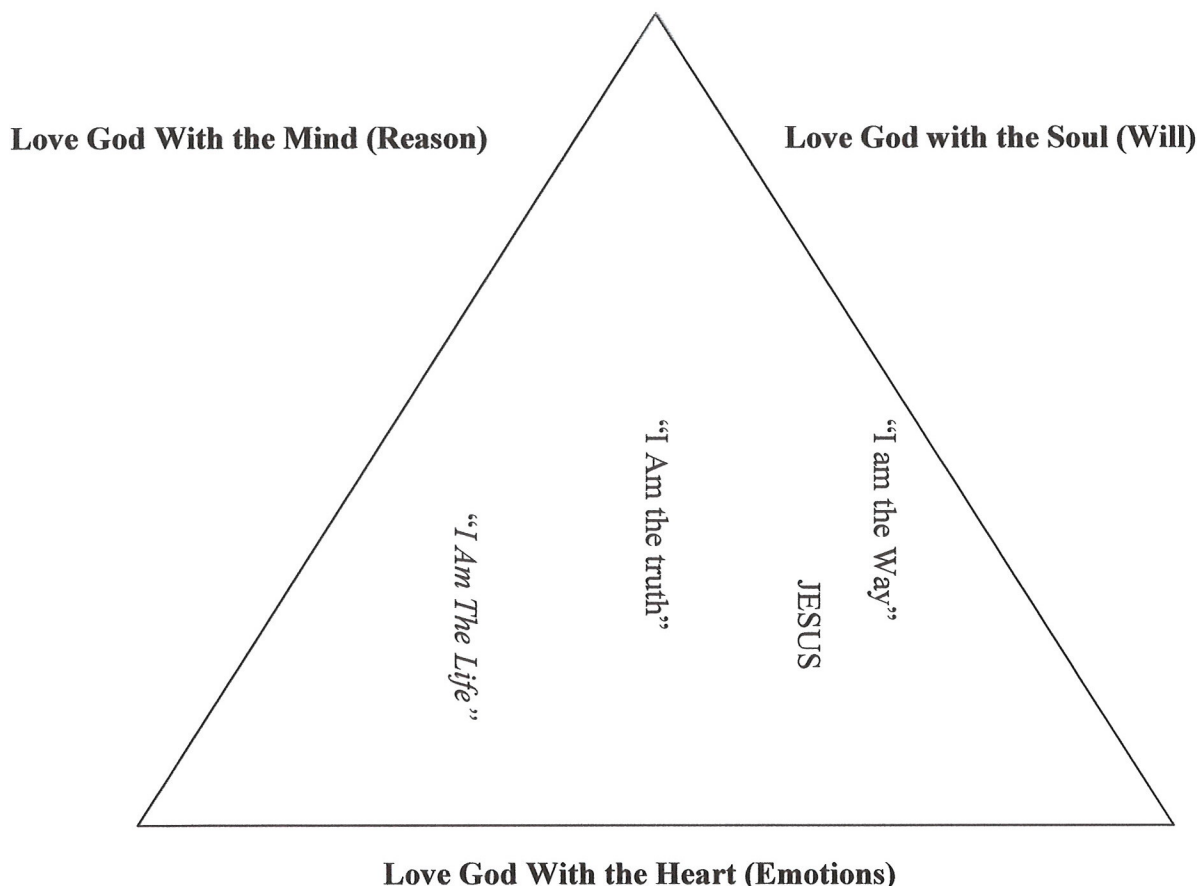
CONCLUSION

Do you need a new strength? Jesus is the Way to strength and power. Do you need the answers to life's mysteries? Jesus is the Truth who has come directly from God's bosoms to reveal reality. Do you need assurance in the face of life's fears and life's loneliness? Jesus is the Life. Come to Jesus!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 12

1. If Jesus' claim to be God turned out to be false, then what two alternatives is a person forced to accept? On the other hand, if Jesus' claim to be God is true, then in terms of decision, what two opposite responses are available to every person?
2. Give your reasoned explanation of the following statement: "Jesus is liar, lunatic, or Lord"! What evidence can you cite that demonstrates that the last of the three alternatives is the only 'reasonable' CONCLUSION?
3. Share your interpretation and response to the following vivid statement by C.S. Lewis: "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to".
4. Carefully study the chart below, and give your comments on the following statement: "What God commands (supreme love for Him) and what my human nature demands (divine-like love), Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life supplies (Divine Enablement)".



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Share Scriptural or personal examples of how Jesus as the Way gives power to a man have weakened will, to enable him to break the power of sin's grip.

- 5. From what source do Christians receive the energy and endurance and power to do great exploits for God? (Note John 14: 12-14; Philippians 2: 13; 4: 13; Acts 14: 19, 20; Colossians 1: 29)**
- 6. According to John 14: 1-2, why can believers face death and the hereafter with great confidence rather than with terrifying fear?**
- 7. According to John 14: 6-9, is it possible to know the Father without knowing the Son?**
- 8. Give your response to and your comments on the following statements: "God is more than what Jesus was while He was on earth, but what Jesus was on earth God has always been in eternity. Jesus is Truth personified, who stepped out of the very bosom of God to reveal the truth about reality. To see Jesus the Son is to see God the Father".**
- 9. To a believer who is beset with fears regarding the unknown future and regarding physical death, what words of reassurance can you share that will help alleviate such fears? (Note John 14: 3, 4, 19, 27)**
- 10. What comfort from God's Word can you share with a believer who feels lonely and in need of companionship? (Note John 14: 20, 21, 23)**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 14

SUBJECT: "I AM THE VINE!"

Scripture: ¹"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands; you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. (John 15: 1-12)

Text: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15: 1-7)

INTRODUCTION

Man is built for eternity. There is within every man a 'God-shaped vacuum' which seeks to be filled with God. Man cannot live by bread alone, but must live by the eternal Word of the eternal God. Man is restless until he finds his rest in God. Man is overbuilt for time – he is built for eternity.

**"And here at last we find
Strict diagnosis of our malady,
Which is, in short, that man is heaven-starved –
Men are born thirsting for infinity".**

Inherent in every man is a basic desire to live – and to live happily and permanently. A well-known atheist in France confessed his most deep-seated urge: "I have in myself a great need of permanence...I mean a need of believing that there are products not subject to decay and degradation, works on which temporal changes have no influence".

PREPOSITION

Life – real life – is found only in the Son. Life is possible for every man.

I. PROVISION OF LIFE

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- A. WORLD'S FALSE PROVISIONS
 - B. CHRIST'S COMPLETE PROVISION
- II. PROCESS OF LIFE
- A. BY GRAFTING
 - B. BY ABIDING
 - C. BY PRUNING
- III. PERIL OF LIFE
- A. BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO ATTEND UPON GOD (OR WAIT UPON GOD)
 - B. BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO TRUST AND OBEY GOD ALONE
 - C. BECAUSE OF A COOLING OF LOVE TOWARDS GOD OR TOWARDS ONES' FELLOWMAN

CONCLUSION

"There are three ways in which we can be useless branches. We can refuse to listen to Jesus Christ at all. We can listen to Him, and then render Him a lip service unsupported by any deeds. We can accept Him as Master and then, in face of the difficulties of the way, or moved by the desire to do as we like and not as He likes, we can abandon Him. But there is one thing we must remember. It is a first principle of the New Testament that uselessness invites disaster. And the fruitless branch is on the way to destruction". (Barclay's John; pg. 204)

It is well said: "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom". And this is most true regarding the spiritual life. The enjoyment of spiritual freedom and life is totally dependent upon one's constant abiding in the Vine (Jesus Christ). To no longer abide in the Vine through disobedience to Christ, is to be eventually severed from the Vine, and "cast into the fire". Either abide or die! No life apart from the life-giving Vine!

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CHAPTER 14

"I AM THE VINE!"

INTRODUCTION

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Inherent in every man is a basic desire to live – and to live happily and permanently. A well-known atheist in France confessed his most deep-seated urge: "I have in myself a great need of permanence...I mean a need of believing that there are products not subject to decay and degradation, works on which temporal changes have no influence".

"Earth does not satisfy us. I cannot help but feel that, that is an impressive fact. I warn you against supposing that, if only you had more of this or more of that, you would be completely satisfied. It is an illusion. Earth cannot satisfy you. William Watson – in his poem 'World-Strangeness' – asked:

**'In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home?
Never wholly be at ease'?
Never!
You weren't meant to".**

(Daily Readings; pg. 104; by William Sangster)

PROPOSITION:

Life – real life – is found only in the Son. There are many of varying philosophies who are merely existing – not living. Life is possible for every man. Let us note, in contrast to the world's philosophies, the only true provision of life.

I. PROVISION OF LIFE

A. WORLD'S FALSE PROVISIONS

- (1) Some have bowed at the shrine of Science, thinking that Science could produce the 'abundant life'. An emancipated**

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Hindu who repudiated the ancient gods of his people and turned atheist, said, "The real gods worshipped in the West are chemistry, electricity, nuclear fission. Let us fall down and worship them". However, as Sangster reminds us, "The swift and terrible destruction fall our civilization is at the end of that road". (Daily Readings; 81)

- (2) **Many Have Sought Happiness By Falling Down To The Goddess Of 'Self'.**

The creed of the humanist is 'Glory to man in the highest'. And 'I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.' Those who worshipped human nature believed there was "no sin at all – just a bit of selfishness which time would correct; that the Golden Age was inevitable and that, by gradual steps, man would move unaided to perfection...And then we woke up. First in 1914, and then again in 1939, we found ourselves in hellish war...a world of atomic submarines, air-raid shelters, gas-masks for babies, guided missiles, and hydrogen bombs...The incredible folly of it; the ignorant conceit; the puffed-up egotism"! (Daily Readings; Sangster; 217)

The God of humanism is a god of hell. When will man learn that the way of selfishness is not the way of happiness? When will man learn that he is creature – Not Creator? When will man learn that he is not the 'master of his fate' or the 'captain of his own soul'?

"Some of the makers of the atomic bombs called together the ministers around Chicago and in a two-days' conference announced: 'Frankly, we're frightened. We can produce the means in atomic energy, but we can't produce the ends for which those means are to be used. Unless you ministers can produce the moral and spiritual ends for which atomic energy is to be used, then we're sunk'. Science turned to religion and cried, 'Save us or we perish'". (Conversion; E.S. Jones; 25, 26)

- (3) **Many There Are Who Have Bowed To The Gods Of Materialism And Secularism.**

'Everything has its price. Money can buy anything. Unhappiness is caused because of economic deprivation'. This is the sentiment of many Americans. The majority of Americas someway feel that more money would someway solve their problems. The wealth of America is sometimes a cause of envy in other lands, but it is revealing to know that the

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American best-sellers are books on how to be happy. Happiness does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses. The worldly man "knows the price of everything and the value of nothing".

Says Mavis: "Secularism, in inverting life values, neglects the interests of the immortal spirit of man, assuming that this spirit can be satisfied with earthly things. It fails to see, with Hannah More, that, 'the soul on earth is an immortal guest, compelled to starve at an unreal feast; a pilgrim panting for the rest to come; an exile anxious for its native home'". (Psychology of Christian Experience; pg. 114) Says Mavis further, "Modern man has a clear vision for secular goals, but dull vision for spiritual goals. It seems that some evil spirit, to use Kierkegaard's figure has put a pair of glasses on the nose of this generation. One of the lenses is a powerful magnifying glass; the other is an equally strong reducing glass. Our generation looks at the secular things through the strong lens and at the spiritual things through the reducing one". (pg. 103)

Man's spirit, unattended and ignored, becomes shriveled and starved. Secularism may fatten the body, but it starves the soul. It may gratify the senses, but it will rotten the fiber of moral character. It may outwardly give fame and fortune, but inwardly it imprisons the poverty-stricken spirit. The result of conforming to cultural standards is mediocrity and hypocrisy. To be squeezed into the world's mold is to be formed into a stunted, dull, and manufactured person.

The greedy secularist, who has grown fat on the accumulation of material goods, remains dissatisfied because of the leanness of his soul. To his bitter disappointment he learns that life does not consist in the abundance of things that a man possesseth. His riches have only given ulcers to his stomach and taken peace from his mind. His false friends stand by only to mock him, and his sad delusion turns to suicidal despair. The crackle of the dollar and the glitter of the coin have lost their appeal, for he finally learns that everything does not have its price and that there are qualities that have no monetary value. Sliding down the slope of life on the bed of perpetual pain caused from his indulgent living, the disillusioned secularist realizes that he has been the subject of a cruel tyrant. The sweet wine of frivolous living has left a bitter taste in his mouth. His one-time admirers and lovers now scorn the 'wrinkled old man'. The swinging music of his youth remains as a strange echo in his mind to mock

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him as a fool. As Solomon of old, the materialistically preoccupied secularist must learn that "the lover of money shall not be satisfied with money, nor the lover of wealth with his gain; this, too, is futility. With the increase of goods there is an increase of those consuming them". (Ecclesiastes 5: 10)

- (4) **Seeing The Futility Of Materialism, Secularism, Humanism, and The Worship Of Science, Many Have Fallen Into Terrible Despair.**

Wars and rumors of wars, famines, the threat of nuclear conflict, a changing economy, the general instability of life, and the unfulfilled promises of science – these all combine to create a general sense of Despair. We even have our philosophers of Despair who are sounding forth no notes of future hope for civilization. Said H.G. Wells, renowned historian, shortly before his death: "A frightful queerness has come into life. Hitherto events have been held together by a certain logical consistency as the heavenly bodies have been held together by the golden cord of gravitation. Now it is as if that cord has vanished and everything is driven anyhow, anywhere, at a steadily increasing velocity. The writer is convinced that there is no way out or around, or through the impasse. It is the end". (E.S. Jones; Conversion; pg. 18)

Said Carl Jung, the great psychiatrist:: "The central neurosis of our time is emptiness". (Ibid; 19) "An eminent unbeliever says that the most you can achieve on this road is 'unyielding despair"'. (Sangster; p.175) Noted atheist philosopher, Bertrand Russell (who had many followers) said: "Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and his entire race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way". (The Word of the Lord Came Unto Me Also; pg. 128)

Is there any hope for modern man? None at all – except Christ!

- (5) **There Are Many Thoughtless, Common People Who Live For Today – And Today Only – And Take No Thought About The Future Of Eternity.**

The best term for them is 'practical atheist'. They do not believe in any reality other than that which they can perceive through their five senses. They shun all talk about spiritual

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reality. Such people are living – no, only existing – on the mere sensual level. Of such people, Paul wrote, *"Their future is eternal loss, for their god is their appetite: they are proud of what they should be ashamed of; and all they think about is this life here on earth"*. (Philippians 3: 19; Living Bible)

"A minister in our neighborhood was out making calls one afternoon and he rang the bell of a certain house, and a woman came to the door, her apron on, flour on her hands – she was holding a can of cherries. She very shortly told him that she didn't know anything about what he had come to talk about and that she wasn't interested in finding out either. Then after a few minutes of conversation, as she was about to close the door, the minister asked 'Do you mind if I ask you what you have in your hand'? And she answered 'A can of cherries'. He said, 'Do you mind if I ask you where you got them': she said, 'Down at the corner, at the store'. And then he asked 'Do you mind if I ask what you're going to do with them': still polite even after this third question she answered 'Why, I am going to put them into a pie'. And then the minister said 'If you don't mind the observation, those cherries are in a better shape than you are. We know what they are – they are cherries. And we know where they came from – they came from the store. And we know where they are going. And from your conversation you have no idea of who you are, you don't understand your roots and where you came from and how you got here, and why you're here and you don't know where you are going, or why you're going there'. After a short moment of stunned silence, the good woman said 'won't you please come in'". (Sermon by Revs. Harold Brockhoff of Lutheran Hour

B. CHRIST'S COMPLETE PROVISION

Said Jesus to God his Father, *"For you have given Him authority over every man and woman in all the earth. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him"*. (John 17: 2) God desires to save all, to give life to all. Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly"*. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"*, said Jesus. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"*, said Jesus. *"Eternal life is in him, and this life gives light to all mankind."* (John 1: 4) *"The Father has life in himself, and has granted his Son to have life in himself."* (John 5: 26) *"Jesus told her, I am the one who raises the dead and gives them life again. Anyone who believes in me, even though he dies like anyone else, shall live again."* (John 11: 26)

Christ is the very essence of Life. When you have Christ, you have life and are enabled to live to the full. Without Christ, one merely exists. Do you

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long for fulfillment and joy and meaning and destiny and hope? Then turn to Christ. He who believes on the Son has eternal life – Now (I John 5: 11, 12) *“And what is it that God has said? That he has given us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son.”*

Life – real - life – is found only in the Son. Many there are who are seeking to find life outside of the Son – in the world. Man is built to worship – someone or something. The world’s gods (materialism, secularism, worship of Science, worship of human nature which is humanism, and sensualism) – none of these satisfy the questing of the human spirit which is made only for God.

- (1) Requests granted (Prayer answered) – verse 7. G. Campbell Morgan; “I am going to render it a little differently. ‘If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall demand as your due whatever you are inclined to, and it shall be generated unto you.’ That rendering is certainly warranted, and is an amazing statement. But do not let us forget the flaming sword which guards the way, If ye abide in Me! If we do that, what then? You shall demand as your due. The Greek word certainly warrants that rendering. It is one of the strongest words used with regard to prayer. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, utter your demands, whatever you are inclined to. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, utter your demands, whatever you are inclined to. It shall be done, and the word means generated, caused to be; creative power shall operate. If we are abiding in Him, and His words are abiding in us, we shall not be inclined to anything out of harmony with His will. That is the condition. But if we are there; then we may demand as our due, and God generates, if necessary, that which is so demanded, as the result of living union with Christ”. (Gospel According to John)
- (2) Fruitfulness in character and Reproductive power (Born to Reproduce) – verse 8.
- (3) Father’s love and security (Sense of God’s security) – verse 9, 10.
- (4) Fullness of joy – verse 11 – A right relationship with God puts one right with the moral laws of the Universe and puts one right within himself. The man, who can live at peace with God and in love with his fellowman, is the truly happy person. A branch vitally attached to the Vine is a healthy, cooperative, and ‘happy’ branch.

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If Christ has provided such a wonderful life, it is important to know the method or the process by which this eternal life can be obtained and maintained. There are three ways in which this happens – (1) By Grafting (Conversion), (2) By Abiding, (3) By Pruning.

II. PROCESS OF LIFE (Methods by which Spiritual Life is appropriated)

A. BY GRAFTING.

The Vine is Jesus, who possesses Life and maintains it as a right of his unique Sonship. The branches have life inasmuch as they are vitally attached (grafted) to the Vine. "In grafting it is imperative that the cambium layers of vine and branch are united and held thus until the life from the vine enters the branch. In the spiritual realm this involves a confession, surrender, saving commitment of the soul to Christ who henceforth becomes Lord in every realm of life. This initial union with Christ is followed by the constant coming of the life-energy of Christ into the believer, progressively sanctifying and confirming him in this new relationship." (Commentary on John; George Allen Turner; pg. 296)

B. BY ABIDING.

John 6: 56, 57): *"Whoever continues to eat my flesh and drink my blood continues to live in union with me and I in union with him. Just as the living Father has sent me and I live because of the Father, so whoever keeps on eating me will live because of me."* (Williams Translation)

Said Jesus: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15: 4) From this we learn: "The mutual indwelling of the disciples and the Saviour is dependent upon the volition of the disciples. The indwelling of Christ within the disciples is presented as the corollary of their abiding in Him" (Robert Shank; Life In The Son, pg. 43)

The important question is this: "How do I maintain this living relationship with Christ?"

1. Obedience to Commands – *"And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."*(John 15:10); ¹⁵*"If you love me, you will obey what I command.(John 14: 21; ²¹Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him";*

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²³Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.(John 15: 23);

²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.(John 15: 26)

"Love and obedience are mutually interdependent. Love prompts and is best expressed by obedience. 'Obedience proves love and secures love in return'." (Turner; 302) Habitual obedience proves love; Constant love results in habitual obedience. (The continuous tenses are used in these verses)

2. Love of Brethren – ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."(John 13: 35); ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.(John 15: 12);

¹Keep on loving each other as brothers." (Hebrews 13: 1);
⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. (I John 4: 7).

3. Unity among Brethren -

²⁰"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their Message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17: 20-21

³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Ephesians 4: 5

⁸Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble". (I Peter 3: 8)

- 4 Sanctified in the Truth – ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (John 17: 17)

5. Continued Belief – John 1: 12: ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become

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children of God—..." (This promise of adoption is given to those who continue to believe. (Westcott)

John 6:29:²⁹ *Jesus answered, and said to them, This is the work of God, that ye believe to him, whom he sent."* (Wuest)

John 20: 31: (Present tense in both words) – believe. One is having eternal life as he is believing. "The word 'abide' is an important one in this Gospel. It occurs, a total of forty times here as compared with only twelve in the other three Gospels. It is used to indicate 'staying, living, dwelling, continuing, persisting, remaining and waiting.'" (Turner; pg. 298)

C. BY PRUNING (verse 2b, 3)

What should be pruned?

- (1) **The Bad.** Sin must immediately be confessed. Proverbs 28: 13 says: *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but who so confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* Remember I John 1: 9 and 2: 1.
- (2) **Some of the Good which hinders growth into the Best.** "The skillful vine dresser knows that many healthy branches must be removed if fruit rather than foliage is desired. These are 'good' branches in that they are healthy, vigorous, and beautiful.. but if they are too numerous they must be severed from the vine the same as the diseased branches.... Christians are to be useful rather than merely ornamental; they should be fruitful...The alert believer is always concerned lest 'the good become the enemy of the best.'...To a Christian who is well-informed and eager to be at his best for the Master, the usual question will not be 'What is wrong with this?' but rather, 'Will this help make me more Christ-like, more useful in his kingdom?' To the person intent on being 'well-pleasing in his sight' many 'good' things will be 'pruned' to make room for the 'best'". (Gospel of John; Turner; pgs. 299, 300)

Taking away that which saps growth means setting priorities:

- a. **In Time.** 'Teach me to number my days that I might get a heart of wisdom'. 'Redeem the time for the days are evil' or 'buy up every opportunity to do well'. One man "reduced a normal life to the length of one day in order to test how far he was forward on the pilgrimage of life. He assumed that life was seventy years and that

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a normal day runs from seven o' clock in the morning till eleven o'clock at night. That being so, he worked it out roughly like this: At 20 years of age it is half-past eleven; at 30 it is two o'clock; at 40 it is four o'clock; at 50 half-past six; at 60, a quarter to nine. What time is it for you?" (Sangster, "Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.")

- b. **In Possessions (Food, house, clothing) – Do I discipline the use of my possessions to get maximum benefit out of them for the good of man and the glory of God, or do I simply use them to bring glory to myself? John Wesley posed these questions: "Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so to preserve thy body in health...a fit instrument of thy soul? Didst thou use thy apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house, and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honor, but mine?" (Mary Alice Teuney; Blueprint For a Christian World; pg. 124)**

- c. **In Reading – Do the books I read benefit me, glorify God, and result in enabling me to help others more? "The rules which Wesley early adopted might advantageously be followed by anyone who desires the utmost returns from books. They were: First, to consider what knowledge you desire to attain to; Secondly, to read no book which does not some way tend to the attainment of that knowledge; Thirdly to read no book which does tend to the attainment of it, unless it be the best in its kind; fourthly, finish one before you begin another; and, fifthly, to read them all in such order that every subsequent book may illustrate and confirm the preceding." (Ibid; Tenney; pg. 142)**

- d. **In Amusements. Concerning Amusements, ask yourself these questions: "First, Does my love for this amusement surpass my love of God and does the time spent upon it rob me of time or energy I should spend in His service? Secondly, does this amusement contribute directly or indirectly to the development of my Christian character? Thirdly, does this amusement**

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have in it any element that will harm either me or another?" (Ibid; 159)

- e. **In Money – Ask yourselves these questions:**
1. **Do I realize that money is a good servant, but a terrible master?**
 2. **Do I realize that it is better to be rich by having fewness of needs rather than being rich by having abundance of possessions?**
 3. **Do I realize that after all my needs are meant, then all I make belongs to other people's needs?**
 4. **Do I realize that the tithe belongs to God?**
 5. **Remember this motto: "Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can."**

**Thou art the Vine,
And I, O Jesus, am a branch of Thine;
And day by day from Thee
New life flows into me.
Naught have I of my own,
But all my strength is drawn from Thee alone.
As, severed from the tree, the branch must die.
So even I
Could never live this life of mine
Apart from Thee, O divine Vine;
But Thou dost dwell in me,
And I in Thee!
Yea, Thine only life through mine doth flow,
And in Thyself I live and grow.**

-E.H. Rivall

John 15 can be looked at in terms of three words: PROVISION of life, PROCESS of life, and PERIL of life. Christ is the only provision of life in contrast to the world's false provisions (Materialism, Secularism, worship of Science, Humanism, Sensualism).

Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the very essence of Life. Christ answers prayers (vs. 7), Christ produces fruitfulness in character and reproduction (vs. 8), Christ gives love and security (vs. 9, 10), and Christ gives fullness of joy (vs. 11).

What is the process of life? (1) Grafting (conversion), (2) Abiding, (3) Pruning.

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It might be good if this were as far as we could go in seeking to understanding this passage of Scripture. So far the exposition has been full of promises and cheer. However, the 'shadow side of every promise is the condition'. 'If ye abide in me' is the condition. The Scriptures are full of both promises and warnings. If we take then promises seriously, then we must also take the warnings seriously. To take the warning passages seriously assumes that there is a real possibility of falling, of spiritual apostasy. In other words, the security of the believer is real – but only for the believer (the one who continues to believe). Some say that apostasy is completely impossible for the true believer. But "completely absurd is the assumption that men are to be sincerely persuaded that apostasy is impossible and, at the same time, sincerely alarmed by the warnings." (Robert Shank; Life In The Son; pg. 172)

John 15 contains a very serious warning – as well as many promises. The promises apply only to those who abide in the Vine (Christ). *"If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."* (John 15: 6)

Jesus Christ could not speak about the blessedness of fruitfulness and the joy of life in Him without speaking about its necessary converse, the awfulness of separation from Him, of barrenness, of withering, and of destruction". (Alexander MaClaren)

It is essential to our spiritual health to be aware of the dangers to spiritual health. Let us face honestly the perils to life and carefully guard against those perils.

III. PERIL OF LIFE

The consequences of failure to abide in Christ are (1) fruitlessness: *'As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me...for apart from me ye can do nothing'* (vs. 4b, 5c); and (2) removal: *"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away...If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned'* (verse 2a, 6). "Robertson comments: 'The apostles are thus vividly warned against presumption. Jesus as the Vine will fulfill his part of the relation as long as the branches keep in vital union with him.'" (Life In the Son; Shank)

A. BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO ATTEND UPON GOD (OR WAIT UPON GOD)

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"When a mortal goes to God for forgiveness and the Holy Spirit, he must receive the gift and, if he is wise, receive it daily for each new day as it comes. That is where discipline comes into the holy life; not the toilsome, straining, failing effort to be good, but the faithful attending on God to receive...The fact of one high moment cannot secure holiness for ever; it is a life of intimate relationship (which issues in mystic indwelling) and faithfulness shows itself in our consistency in attending...Most Christians reverse Wesley's order. Enlightenment comes first and they need to forge the discipline afterwards. Some fail to do it, and the precious thing they found slips from them. They may even come to doubt if they discovered any secret at all, and in chill cynicism write it off as the ebullience of adolescence. They have ceased to wait upon God and this is the heavy price. There can be no continuance of the holy life in the soul of any man who does not continually wait on God." (Sangster's Daily Readings; pg. 188)

To be kept vitally attached to the Vine, "it will mean arranging life, arranging prayer, arranging silence in such a way that there is never a day when we give ourselves a chance to forget Him." (Barclay's John; pg. 205)

Jesus said, "*The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak; watch therefore that ye enter not into temptation.*" (Need for discipline: example of my mother often went to prayer meeting even with a head ache).

"Get away into the 'secret place of the Most High, and rise into a higher altitude and atmosphere than the region of work and effort; and sitting still with Christ, let His love and His powers pour themselves into your heart. 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee.' Get away from the jangling of politics, and empty controversies and busy distractions of daily duty. The harder our toil necessarily is, the more let us see to it that we keep a little cell within the central life where in silence we hold communion with the Master. 'Abide in Me and I in you'". (Alexander Maclaren; pg. 13) (John)

"The best way to secure Christian conduct is to cultivate communion with Christ." (Ibid; 13); "Get more of the sap into the branch, and there will be more fruit!" (Ibid 13); "First of all be, and then do; first of all receive, and then give forth; first of all draw near to Christ, and then there will be fruit to His praise"! (Ibid; pg. 14); Discipline is important, but discipline without Christ is futile! "We may cultivate individual graces at the expense of the harmony and beauty of the whole character." (Ibid 13, 14)

B. BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO TRUST AND OBEY GOD ALONE

Are we bearing fruit? No amount of ascetic discipline or devotional fervor is a substitute for the practical obedience which alone is 'fruit'. "*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away*". (vs. 2a) "Apart from Him, I can

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do nothing. All fruit that I ever bear or can bear comes wholly from His life within me. No particle of it is mine as distinct from His. Whatever has its ultimate origin in myself is sin.” (William Temple; Readings In St. John’s Gospel; pg. 251)

- (a) Some trust riches instead of Christ.**
- (b) Some compromise their standards and succumb to influences of world.**

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. (I John 2: 15-16)

¹⁷"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." ¹⁸"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6: 17, 18)

²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12: 2)

Wrote Paul in sadness: “Demas, in love with this present world, hath forsaken me.” What a tragedy – that a one-time disciple and companion of Paul would become infatuated with the world and leave Christ’s work! May we guard our own hearts! In matters of Christianity, a passionless heart is a dangerous thing!

**“May thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart,
My zeal inspire;
As Thou hast died for me,
O may my love to thee
Pure, warm and changeless be,
A living fire!”**

**“Teach me to love thee as thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,
My heart an altar and thy love the flame.”**

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C. BECAUSE OF A COOLING OF LOVE TOWARDS GOD OR TOWARDS ONE'S FELLOWMAN.

The one, who persists in carrying a grudge towards others, eventually severs himself from the Vine. One cannot love God and at the same time hate his fellowman. " ⁷*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*" (I John 4: 7, 8); ²⁰*If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.* (I John 4: 20-21)

Love of God will manifest itself in love of the brethren. The vertical relationship cannot exist without the horizontal relationship. One cannot call God 'Father' without calling his fellowman 'Brother'. Love for the Father cannot exist without love for the family. One's forgiveness from God is guaranteed on the basis of willingness to forgive one's brother. ¹⁴*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.* (Matthew 6:14, 15) "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." "The forgiving grace of God cannot dwell in bitter, unforgiving hearts. He who refuses to forgive his brother has no real sense of need for the forgiveness of God and no just claim on His gracious forgiveness". (Shank; pg. 40) And those who are attached to the Vine are those who constantly sense their need of God's grace and forgiveness.

Continued attachment to the Vine depends upon loving cooperation among the branches.

CONCLUSION

Continued failure to attend or wait upon God and avail oneself of the means of Grace can cause one to be severed from the life-giving Vine. Failure to trust God and obey Him can cause the same. A cooling of one's love towards God or one's fellowman is a dangerous, perilous thing.

"There are three ways in which we can be useless branches. We can refuse to listen to Jesus Christ at all. We can listen to Him, and then render Him a lip service unsupported by any deeds. We can accept Him as Master and then, in face of the difficulties of the way, or moved by the desire to do as we like and not as He likes, we can abandon Him. But there is one thing we must remember. It is a first principle of the New Testament that uselessness invites disaster. And the fruitless branch is on the way to destruction". (Barclay's John; pg. 204)

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It is well said: "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom". And this is most true regarding the spiritual life. The enjoyment of spiritual freedom and life is totally dependent upon one's constant abiding in the Vine (Jesus Christ). To no longer abide in the Vine through disobedience to Christ, is to be eventually severed from the Vine, and "cast into the fire". Either abide or die! No life apart from the life-giving Vine!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS –CHAPTER 14

- 1. List and describe some of the world's 'gods', the worship of which brings no lasting satisfaction to the soul of men.**
- 2. List as many Scriptures as you can which clearly indicate that Jesus Christ is the very essence and source of abundant life.**
- 3. What are God's promise in John 15: 7, and what important condition must be met in order for one to expect the promise to be fulfilled?**
- 4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If we are abiding in Him, and His words are abiding in us, we shall not be inclined to anything out of harmony with His will".**
- 5. According to John 15: 7-11, what wonderful benefits and blessings can the believer, who is in union with Christ, anticipated?**
- 6. What, concretely speaking, does it mean for a person to be grafted into the Vine (Jesus Christ)?**
- 7. According to John 15: 4, is it possible for Christ to indwell a person if the person does not first exercise a positive volition to surrender himself to Christ (the Vine)? According to this verse, is it true that all persons - believe and non-believer – have the so-called 'Christ spirit' within them?**
- 8. As used at least forty different times in the Gospel of John, what does the word 'Abide' mean". What are some of the conditions which sincere believers must seek to meet in their daily lives if they intend 'to abide' in the Son (Vine)?**
- 9. When Jesus states that every fruit-bearing branch in the Vine needs to be pruned in order that greater fruitfulness may result, what do you, practically-speaking, think that 'pruning' involves? (John 15: 2b, 3)**
- 10. Illustrate from your own life or from your observation of the lives of productive Christians which you know, the meaning of the following statement: "To the person intent on being 'well-pleasing in His sight' many 'good' things will be 'pruned' to make room for the 'best'." What is meant by the statement: "The good may become the enemy of the best"?**
- 11. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Completely absurd is the assumption that men are to be sincerely persuaded that apostacy is impossible and, at the same time, sincerely alarmed by the warnings".**
- 12. What, according to John 15: 6, is the terrible ultimate consequence to the one-time believer who chooses no longer to abide in the Vine?**

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13. Does the fact that it is possible for a one-time believer to sever himself from the Vine (by continued deliberate disobedience), conflict with one's understanding of God's sovereign power and His unconditional love for humanity? What is a proper understanding of the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will (both before and after a person's initial conversion to Christ)? Is it true to say that with every promise to be claimed in the Bible there is a corresponding condition to be met? Tell if you agree with the following statement: "Jesus as the Vine will fulfill His part of the relation as long as the branches keep invited union with him. Can God's faithfulness 'avail' for man's unfaithfulness (Note 2 Timothy 2: 12)? Is it not true that God's faithfulness (in spite of man's unfaithfulness) is never 'in question' (2 Timothy 2: 13), but that it is possible for a faithless (one-time-believer) to be disowned by God? (Note: The fact that a person has been disowned by God (because of faithfulness), does not call God's unfaithfulness character or His unconditional love into question. God cannot unconditionally 'keep' a person 'saved' if that person deliberately chooses to return to a life of sin and disobedience!"
14. Considering John 15: 16, do you agree with the following statement by the great expositor Alexander MaClaren? "One of two things must befall the branch, either it is in the Vine or it gets into the fire. If we would avoid the fire let us see to it that we are in the Vine".
15. What is the meaning of and the place for 'discipline' in living the Christian life and in maintaining a vital relationship with Christ (the Vine)? Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "There can be no continuance of the holy life in the soul of any man who does not continually wait on God". Is it possible to have discipline and devotional practical fervor without the exercise of practical obedience in one's life?
16. What, to you, does it mean to get away into the 'secret place of the Most High'? Why is the discipline of maintaining a 'Daily Quiet Time' so important if one is to maintain his relationship with God? Do you agree with the following statement? "The best way to secure Christian conduct is to cultivate communion with Christ." Share practical ways in which you have learned to 'cultivate communion with Christ'.
17. Tell why you agree with the following statement: "All fruit that I ever bear or can bear comes wholly from His life within me. No particle of it is mine as distinct from His. Whatever has its ultimate origin in myself is sin." Does man have any inherent 'goodness' of his own, apart from Christ?
18. What are some of the perils which true believers must avoid if they are to maintain their relationship with God? (Note I John 2: 13-16; II Corinthians 6: 17, 18; Romans 12: 2; 2 Timothy 4: 10; Revelations 2: 4-6, 3: 16; Hebrews 12: 14-17; Matthew 6: 14, 15)

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19. **What, according to William Barclay, are three ways in which we can be useless branches?**

20. **Do you agree with the following statement by William Barclay? – “There is one thing we must remember. It is a first principle of the New Testament that uselessness invites disaster. And the fruitless branch is on the way to destruction”.**

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OUTLINE - CHAPTER 15

SUBJECT: I AM THE GREAT PROTECTOR!

SCRIPTURE: *"¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. ¹³"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." (John 17: 11-15)*

TEXT: *"¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." (John 17: 11-15)*

INTRODUCTION

How do you feel when someone tells you that he is praying for you?

Of the five specific requests which Jesus made for His disciples – namely, Unity, Joy, Sanctification, Love, and Protection – we want in this message to focus on ‘Protection’. (vs. 11, 12, 15)

PROPOSITION

How comforting to know that Jesus prayed for your protection – protection from the evil one (Satan)! Let us look at the **NEED** for protection, the **PROMISES** of protection, and the **MEANS** of protection.

I. NEED FOR PROTECTION

- A. BECAUSE BELIEVERS, INDEPENDENT OF DIVINE HELP, ARE VULNERABLE AND WEAK.**
- B. BELIEVERS NEED PROTECTION BECAUSE SATAN IS CONSTANTLY SEEKING TO DESTROY BELIEVERS.**
- C. WHY DO BELIEVERS NEED PROTECTION? BECAUSE SATAN’S FOLLOWERS DESIRE TO DESTROY BELIEVERS ALSO. CHRIST’S COMPLETE PROVISION IS GUARANTEED!**

II. PROMISES OF PROTECTION

III. MEANS OF PROTECTION

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- A. CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE, AND POWERFUL TO PROTECT AND IS PRAYING TO THE FATHER FOR HIS CHILDREN.
- B. CHRIST IMPARTS WISDOM IN ORDER THAT HIS CHILDREN MAY DISCERN THE DEVIL'S DEVICES.
- C. ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH GOD'S SAVING (PROTECTING) MINISTRY IS MANIFESTED TO THE SINCERE BELIEVER IS GOD'S PROVISION OF A WAY OF 'ESCAPE' DURING A SEVERE TEMPTATION.
- D. ANOTHER MEANS BY WHICH GOD GIVES US PROTECTION IS HIS PROVISION OF SPIRITUAL WEAPONRY FOR SPIRITUAL BATTLES.
- E. A WONDERFUL WAY IN WHICH GOD SOMETIMES GIVES DELIVERANCE IS TO SEND AN ANGEL OR AN ENTIRE HOST OF ANGELS TO PROTECT HIS CHILDREN.
- F. ANOTHER WAY BY WHICH THE LORD PROVIDES PROTECTION DURING SPIRITUAL BATTLE IS HIS PROVISION OF ENDURANCE DURING TIMES WHEN SATAN THROWS UP OBSTACLES ON OUR PATHWAY.
- G. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS ALSO PROVIDED FOR US THROUGH GOD'S PROVISION OF THE CLEANSING BLOOD OF JESUS, AND THROUGH THE AFFIRMATIVE TESTIMONY OF CLEANSED BELIEVERS.
- H. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS PROVIDED FOR US ON A DAILY AND REGULAR BASIS, THROUGH THE ATONING BLOOD OF CHRIST.
- I. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS ASSURED TO US BELIEVERS, EVEN DURING MORAL FAILURE – IF WE TRULY REPENT AND ACCEPT THE ADVOCACY OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.
- J. ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS ASSURED TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS; FOR SATAN IS A DEFEATED FOE WHOM EVENTUALLY WILL BE VANQUISHED TO HIS ETERNAL DESTINY – THE 'LAKE OF FIRE'.

CONCLUSION

The Bible teaches us that even though sin abounds, grace super abounds; that although Satan is strong, Christ is stronger yet; that even though sin seems to triumph, righteousness will have the final word; that although Christians are not without their troubles and temptations, the power of Christ to save and to restore and to maintain believers is altogether adequate!

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CHAPTER 15

"I AM THE GREAT PROTECTOR!"

INTRODUCTION

While it is true that people need much more than prayer, it is also true that unless others have your prayers, nothing else you do for others will ultimately help them. People need your prayers more than they need anything else. When you receive another's prayers, you receive perhaps the choicest of all gifts!

My youngest daughter left a taped note on my bedroom wall which I discovered after she returned to college after Christmas vacation. It read: "Thank you Dad for all your prayers and for all the fun times. Love, Rhonda". Every time I see that note (which I left taped to the wall), I breathe a prayer for her and for her older sister.

It was Samuel in the Old Testament who said about Saul, the first king of Israel who failed to follow the Lord, "The Lord forbids that I sin against you by failing to pray for you."

Jesus did so many things for His disciples – He taught them, He performed miracles for them, He provided a loving model for them to follow, and He even suffered for them. But among the great things that Jesus did for His disciples, one of the greatest acts of love was Jesus' prayers for His followers. The 17th chapter of John records Jesus' prayer for the disciples – a prayer for their unity:

"¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one; ²⁰My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (vs. 20-23); a prayer for their joy: ¹³"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. a prayer for their joy (vs. 13); A prayer for their sanctification: ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. (vs. 17-19); a prayer for their increased love: ²⁵"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (v.25-26); a prayer for protection against Satanic attacks: ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that

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name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." (vs. 11, 12, and 15)

Jesus' prayer for His immediate disciples extended to future disciples as well. *"I am not praying for these alone, but also for the future believers who will come to me because of the testimony of these"* (John 17: 20)

Of the five specific requests which Jesus made for His disciples – namely, Unity, Joy, Sanctification, Love, and Protection – we went in this message to focus on 'Protection'. (vs. 11, 12, 15)

PROPOSITION

How comforting to know that Jesus prayed for your protection – protection from the evil one (Satan)! Let us look at the NEED for protection, the PROMISES of protection, and the MEANS of protection.

I. NEED FOR PROTECTION

Why do believers need protection?

A. BECAUSE BELIEVERS, INDEPENDENT OF DIVINE HELP, ARE VULNERABLE AND WEAK.

Jesus said, *"Watch and pray that ye do not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"*. at best, believers are no 'match for the devil. As Martin Luther says in "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" – "Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing; Were not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choosing. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He! Lord Shabuoath His name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle".

Every believer has certain weaknesses – sometimes called 'besetting sins' – which must be confessed and forsaken. The writer of the Hebrews exhorts us believers to *"strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up"*. (Hebrews 12: 1; Living Bible)

It is said that a "chain is only as strong as its weakest link". We need the strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit because we all have weaknesses, and these weaknesses of our flesh can be easily exploited by the enemy of our souls.

B. BELIEVERS NEED PROTECTION BECAUSE SATAN IS CONSTANTLY SEEKING TO DESTROY BELIEVERS.

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He hates God, and Satan is taking out his bitterness upon mankind, with his 'fiery darts' especially aimed at believers. "He (Satan) is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short". (Revelations 12: 12b) Satan is like a "roaring lion", seeking to devour God's children. It is his desire to take believers captive, that he may sift them like wheat. He is a murderer and the father of all murderers. As the author of all lies and deception, he approaches believers as "an angel of light". (2 Corinthians 11: 14) He comes as a "wolf dressed in sheep's clothing".

Believers need protection because of the violent nature of Satan's actions against believers, and because of the subtle tactics which he uses to deceive and to mislead. Believers need the mighty power of God within them, and all of God's spiritual armor on them, in order to stand safe against all the strategies and tricks of Satan. ¹² *For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.* (Ephesians 6: 12, Living Bible)

It is true that Satan is a defeated foe, but he is nevertheless a very dangerous foe. His sentence has been established, but the execution of his sentence – the "lake of fire" (Revelations 20) – has not yet been accomplished. Even though the head of this evil foe has been crushed, he has not been yet destroyed. He is still on the loose and his power is so great that no man dares to mock him or seek to battle him within his own strength. Not even Michael, one of the mightiest of the angels, dared to accuse Satan or directly to battle with him. "Michael one of the mightiest of the angels, when he was arguing with Satan about Moses' body, did not dare to accuse even Satan, or jeer at him, but simply said, *"The Lord rebuke you?"*" (Jude 1; 9, Living Bible)

C. WHY DO BELIEVERS NEED PROTECTION? BECAUSE SATAN'S FOLLOWERS DESIRE TO DESTROY BELIEVERS ALSO.

In the last days before Christ returns, there will be an increase in wickedness. Wicked men will become more blatant in their evil and more aggressive in their attacks against the righteous. Wrote Paul to Timothy: "*Evil men and false teachers will become worse and worse, deceiving many, they themselves having been deceived by Satan*". (II Timothy 3: 13, Living Bible)

"Yes, those who decide to please Christ Jesus by living godly lives will suffer at the hands of those who hate him". (II Timothy 3: 12; Living Bible)

Jesus predicted the future persecution of His disciples, and He told them to keep the faith and to remain encouraged during the coming days of suffering. Said Jesus to His disciples just shortly before His own death at the hands of evil men: "*I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith.*"

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² For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. ⁴ Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer. (John 16: 1, 2, 4; Living Bible) ³³ I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (John 16: 33b)

Yes, every sensitive believer knows he needs God's special protection against evil, because of his own human weakness, because of Satan's subtle tactics and vicious plots, because of the evil intents of evil men who desire to destroy the lives and the reputations of godly people.

II. PROMISES OF PROTECTION

How wonderful to know that what believers so greatly need - protection – God so graciously promises. Jesus prayed for the protection of His followers: *"Now I am leaving the world, and leaving them behind, and coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your own care – all those you have given me – so that they will be united just as we are with none missing. During my time here I have kept safe within your family all of those you gave me...I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from Satan's power."* (John 17: 11, 12, 15; Living Bible)

"It is an uplifting thing to feel that God is the sentinel who stands over our lives to protect us and guard us from the assaults of evil". (Barclay's John; pg. 253)

In terms of confronting evil men and the evil one himself (Satan), Paul makes both a prayer request and shares a positive affirmation with the Thessalonian Church: *"Pray that we will be saved out the clutches of evil men, for not everyone loves the Lord. But the Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind."* (II Thessalonians 3: 2, 3; Living Bible)

The God we serve is a covenant-keeping God whose power to save and whose power to keep us safe in His care is very great! Wrote Jude, (God) is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence with mighty shouts of everlasting joy. Amen". (Jude 1: 25; Living Bible)

**"Thro' days of toil when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.**

**God will take care of you,
Thro' every day, O'er all the way.
God will take care of you".**

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⁶ So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. ⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. ⁸ Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are. ¹⁰ In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. (I Peter 5: 6-10)

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no, never forsake"! (How Firm A Foundation; vs. 4)

III. MEANS OF PROTECTION

In His prayer to the Father, Jesus reveals the means by which His disciples would be kept safe from the snares of evil. "*Holy Father, protect by the power of your name – the name you gave me*". (vs. 11)

By what name is God known? Among the many names by which God is known, one name is 'Savior'. Paul speaks of "God our Savior" in I Timothy 1:1. "*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth*". (I Timothy 4: 1))

God's name is Savior, i.e., God's purpose is a saving purpose. God is not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (II Peter 3: 9). Objectively—speaking, God has provided salvation for all persons. Those who personally accept God's universal offer are truly saved. God's intention is to save all, i.e., to protect all humans, from eternal destruction. But, while God's perfect will is universal salvation of mankind, God's permissive will is operative when sinners (free will agents) choose to reject God's saving offer and refuse to repent of personal transgressions against God's holy will.

God's name – Savior – is the same name that was given to Jesus the Son of God. As God the Father is called 'Savior, so also Jesus the Son is called Savior. "*She (Mary) will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins*". (Matthew 1: 21) To the shepherds on the hillside, the angels announced "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord*". (Luke 2:11) "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him". (John 3: 17) "*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" (I Timothy 1: 15) "*Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them*". (Hebrews 7: 25)

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A. CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE, AND POWERFUL TO PROTECT AND IS PRAYING TO THE FATHER FOR HIS CHILDREN.

Said Jesus to Simon Peter, *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail". (Luke 22: 31) Think of it! Christ is actually praying to the Father that we may not fail and fall into sin!*

B. CHRIST IMPARTS WISDOM IN ORDER THAT HIS CHILDREN MAY DISCERN THE DEVIL'S DEVICES.

Wrote Paul to the Corinthians: *"We are not unaware of his (Satan's) schemes". (II Corinthians 2: 10b) Believers, through the Word of God and by the Spirit's insights, can be forearmed with knowledge, so that Satan's schemes and tricks can be known and avoided. In the face of tests and temptations the believer has a right to ask God for wisdom, that he may know how to turn Satan's stumbling blocks into God's steppingstones for spiritual growth. "Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow...If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give you a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; he will not resent it". (James 1, 2, 3, 5; Living Bible)*

C. ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH GOD'S SAVING (PROTECTING) MINISTRY IS MANIFESTED TO THE SINCERE BELIEVER IS GOD'S PROVISION OF A WAY OF 'ESCAPE' DURING A SEVERE TEMPTATION.

Wrote Paul to the Corinthians: *"Remember this – the wrong desires that come into your life aren't anything new and different. Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you. And no temptation is irresistible. You can trust God to keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it, for he has promised this and will do what he says. He will show you how to escape temptation's power so that you can bear up patiently against it". (I Corinthians 10: 13; Living Bible)*

D. ANOTHER MEANS BY WHICH GOD GIVES US PROTECTION IS HIS PROVISION OF SPIRITUAL WEAPONRY FOR SPIRITUAL BATTLES.

We know, of course, that the battle is the Lord's and that it is not by our own might or by our own power that we can win the battle, but, nevertheless, we as believers must cooperate with the Lord if victory is to be assured. We can take no ultimate credit for victory over Satan and his forces, but the victory will not be assured to us believers without our response of careful obedience

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and moral effort and prayerful watchfulness. The Lord provides armor for his soldiers, but it is the soldiers who must put on the armor.

Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian believers applies also to us modern believers: *"Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy whenever he attacks, and when it is all over, you will still be standing up. But to do this, you will need the strong belt of truth and the breastplate of God's approval. Wear shoes that are able to speed you on as you preach the Good News of peace with God. In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. And you will need the helmet of salvation and the sword for the Spirit which is the Word of God. Pray all the time"*. (Ephesians 6: 13-18a; Living Bible) When Jesus was tempted by the devil, Jesus resisted the evil one by quoting Scripture (Matthew 4). The Psalmist wrote: *"Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee"*. John noted that it is young men who are strong with God's Word who win their struggle against Satan. (I John 2: 14)

E. *"A WONDERFUL WAY IN WHICH GOD SOMETIMES GIVES DELIVERANCE IS TO SEND AN ANGEL OR AN ENTIRE HOST OF ANGELS TO PROTECT HIS CHILDREN. THE WRITER OF THE HEBREWS NOTES THAT "THE ANGELS ARE SPIRIT – MESSENGERS SENT OUT TO HELP AND CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE TO RECEIVE HIS SALVATION". (HEBREWS 1: 14; LIVING BIBLE)*

¹⁴ *So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.* ¹⁵ *When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. "Oh, sir, what will we do now?" the young man cried to Elisha.* ¹⁶ *"Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!"* ¹⁷ *Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The Lord opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire. (II Kings 6: 14-17)*

F. *ANOTHER WAY BY WHICH THE LORD PROVIDES PROTECTION DURING SPIRITUAL BATTLE IS HIS PROVISION OF ENDURANCE DURING TIMES WHEN SATAN THROWS UP OBSTACLES ON OUR PATHWAY.*

Wrote Paul to the Thessalonian believers: *"Dear brothers, after we left you and had been away from you but a very little while (though our hearts never left you) we tried hard to come back to see you once more. We wanted very much to come and I, Paul, tried again and again, but Satan stopped us"*. (I Thessalonians 2: 17-18; Living Bible)

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The Christian life is certainly not without many obstacles and difficulties, but the Lord keeps our hope alive in spite of dark circumstances. Wrote Paul: *"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going".* (II Corinthians 4: 8-9; Living Bible)

**"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee;
I only design thy dross to consume,
And thy gold to refine"**

(How Firm A Foundation)

"In spite of obstacles and setbacks which the evil forces cause in our lives, the Lord will enable us to endure and to persevere. One of the 'secrets' to endurance during tribulations and temptations is praise of our God!

**"When you're up against a struggle that shatters all your dreams, and your hopes have been crushed by Satan's manifested schemes,
And you feel the urge within you to submit to earthly fears,
Don't let the faith you're standing in seem to disappear.**

**"Now Satan is a liar, and he tries to make us think
That we are paupers, when he knows himself we're children of the King;
So lift up the mighty shield of faith, the battle has been won.
We know that Jesus Christ is risen, and the work's already done!**

Chorus:

**"Praise the Lord---
He can work through those who praise Him,
Praise the Lord ---
For our God inhabits praise,
Praise the Lord---
For the chains that seem to bind you.
Serve only to remind you
That they drop powerless behind you
When you praise Him!"**

G. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS ALSO PROVIDED FOR US THROUGH GOD'S PROVISION OF THE CLEANSING BLOOD OF JESUS, AND THROUGH THE AFFIRMATIVE TESTIMONY OF CLEANSED BELIEVERS.

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In Revelation 12, Satan is called the "Accuser of the brethren". He accuses believers day and night before our God. (Revelations 12: 10) He seeks to inflict guilt upon sincere believers, accusing them of matters for which they are not responsible. How do believers overcome such a vicious and guilt – producing enemy? Revelation 12: 11 say: *"They (believers) defeated him by the blood of the Lamb, and by their testimony; for they did not love their lives but laid them down for him (Christ)"*.

*"The blood, the blood, is all my plea,
O hallelujah, it cleanses me".*

When you feel guilty or condemned, then plead the blood of Jesus as your safety and security. Testify boldly for Jesus Christ before others. If, like Stephen (Acts 7), you face martyrdom for Christ because of false accusations from Satan and his evil slanderers, then be assured that Christ will stand beside you even as you die for your Lord! *"And as the murderous stones came hurtling at him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'"*. (vs. 59) Just moments before Stephen was stoned, he told his persecutors, "Look ,I see the heavens opened and Jesus the Messiah standing beside God, at his right hand"! (vs. 56)

Stephen was a follower of Jesus who did not love his own life, but laid down his life for Christ. (Revelations 12: 11) Even though he lost his body in death, Stephen nevertheless defeated Satan through the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony. (Revelation 12: 11) He entered heaven victoriously!

Wrote Martin Luther:

*"Let goods and kindred go,
The mortal life also;
This body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever".*

H. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS PROVIDED FOR US ON A DAILY AND REGULAR BASIS, THROUGH THE ATONING BLOOD OF CHRIST.

"If we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin". (I John 1: 7; Living Bible)

*"The cleansing stream, I see, I see,
I plunge and oh, it cleanses me".*

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- I. SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS ASSURED TO US BELIEVERS, EVEN DURING MORAL FAILURE – IF WE TRULY REPENT AND ACCEPT THE ADVOCACY OF OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.**

¹ My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. ² He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.” (I John 2:1-2; Living Bible)

- J. ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL PROTECTION IS ASSURED TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS; FOR SATAN IS A DEFEATED FOE WHO EVENTUALLY WILL BE VANQUISHED TO HIS ETERNAL DESTINY – THE ‘LAKE OF FIRE’.**

Wrote Luther about the defeat of Satan and his hosts:

**“And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth and triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him”.**

Never forget what the ultimate destiny of Satan will be: “Then the devil will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and will be tormented forever”. (Revelations 20: 10; Living Bible)

CONCLUSION

The Bible teaches us that even though sin abounds, grace super abounds; that although Satan is strong, Christ is stronger yet; that even though sin seems to triumph, righteousness will have the final word; that although Christians are not without their troubles and temptations, the power of Christ to save and to restore and to maintain believers is altogether adequate!

Never forget: “The eternal God is your Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33: 27a)

How reassuring is God’s promises to His people; “Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed. I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand”. (Isaiah 41: 10)

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"I will be your God through all your lifetime, yes, even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and be your Saviour". (Isaiah 46: 4)

Paul's affirmation of victory through our Lord Jesus Christ is the basis of our personal security in the midst of life's troubles:

"Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ...For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away...Nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when he died for us". (Romans 8: 37-39; Living Bible)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 15

1. How do you feel when someone tells you that he is praying for you?
2. Tell if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Unless others have your prayers, nothing else you do for others will ultimately help them".
3. Name at least five (5) things for which Jesus prayed for His disciples, as recorded in John 17.
4. Why is John 17: 20 so relevant for you who live many centuries later from the time of Jesus' prayer in John 17?
5. Why do you (and all other believers) need protection?
6. Are believers vulnerable to temptation, sin and moral ruin if they do not regularly pray? ("watch and pray that ye do not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak". – Jesus)
7. Give your personal interpretation and application of the following Scripture: (*Strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up*). (Hebrews 12: 1; Living Bible)
8. In light of your particular human weaknesses and moral vulnerabilities, do you regularly seek the strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit?
9. What are some of the titles which the Bible assigns to the enemy of your soul, causing the sincere believer to walk carefully and prayerfully before His God? (Note Ephesians 6: 12)
10. In light of Christ's resurrection which brought defeat to Satan, what is the present "status" of Satan in the world, and what is the proper attitude that every sincere believer should have toward Satan?
11. As believers approach the latter days of human history, what should they expect in terms of moral and spiritual realities and conditions? (Note II Timothy 3: 12, 13; John 16: 1, 2, 4, 33)
12. What specifically was Jesus' prayer for protection for His disciples, as recorded in John 17: 11, 12, and 15?
13. To what extent do you receive comfort and encouragement from the following Scripture? "*The Lord is faithful; he will make you strong and guard you from satanic attacks of every kind*". (II Thessalonians 3: 2-33; Living Bible)

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14. **What trait of God's character is affirmed in Jude 1: 25, a divine trait that gives you confidence during your spiritual struggles against temptation and evil?**
15. **If you (an imperfect and fallible Christians) desire earnestly to be faithful to your God, what assurance do you have that you will find victory over evil and sin and Satan?**
16. **Does God predestine some individuals to be eternally lost (against their will to be saved), or does God desire the salvation of every person (dependent upon their desire to accept Christ's offer of forgiveness)? (Note 11 Peter 3: 9; I Timothy 2: 3-4; I Timothy 4: 10)**
17. **What is the "underlying theme" in all of the following verses? (Matthew 1: 21; Luke 2: 11; John 3: 17; I Timothy 1: 15; Hebrews 7: 25.**
18. **Does the fact that Christ is praying for your protection give you a sense of amazement and awe and gratitude?**
19. **In the face of your particular trials and temptations, what does God promise to grant to you, if you ask Him in faith? (James 1: 2, 3, 5)**
20. **Considering the wonderful promise of I Corinthians 10: 13, can you think (from your own experience and from your observation of other believers) of various ways that God can enable tempted ones to find "ways of escape" and "ways of victory"?**
21. **Considering the various pieces of spiritual armor made available to Christians in warfare (Ephesians 6: 13-18), what must you do to practically and effectively use this armour?**
22. **Tell to what extent you agree or disagree with the declaration of the following statements: "We can take no ultimate credit for victory over Satan and his forces, but the victory will not be assured to us believers without our response of careful obedience and moral effort and prayerful watchfulness. The Lord provides armor for his soldiers, but it is the soldiers who must put on the armor". (How have you, as a sincere believer, learned daily to put on the armor to protect yourself in your life's spiritual battles? Christ is the "Great Protector", but He can't protect you without your obedient cooperation).**
23. **When Jesus was tempted, how did He react to Satan? (Matthew 4) Of all the pieces of spiritual armor listed (Ephesians 6: 13-18), how many pieces are "Offensive weapons?" among several good reasons to memorize Scriptures, would you agree that quoting Scriptures against evil forces (Satan, demons, and worldly forces) is one of the very important uses of memorized verses?**
24. **What confidence did the apostle John express regarding "young men", in I John 2: 14?**

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25. **Although God doubtlessly uses His angels for multiple purposes, what apparently is one of the primary (wonderful) purposes for which God created angels, according to Hebrews 1: 14) (Also Note II Kings 6: 14-17)**
26. **What is one of the most effective things you can do to protect yourself against despair (and the temptation to abandon your God) when your trials are severe and it seems so difficult for you to persevere in the light of your great personal losses and your heart-breaking grief? (Note II Corinthians 4: 8-9) (Note I Thessalonians 2: 17-18)**
27. **When Satan seeks to inflict guilt upon sincere believers (accusing them of matters for which they are not responsible), how do believers overcome such a vicious and guilt-producing enemy? (Note Revelation 12: 10-11)**
28. **What evidence is there that, even if a believer loses his physical life in martyrdom, God nevertheless will give that suffering believer needed grace to face death, and also ultimate protection to safely and gloriously enter God's eternal kingdom in heaven? (Note Acts 7: 56-59)**
29. **According to I John 1:7, are you daily (regularly) enjoying the powerful and the protecting "blood of Jesus", as it cleanses you from all things that would displease God and that would hinder your spiritual, dynamic growth?**
30. **If you experience a moral failure in your life (making you possibly more vulnerable to hurtful attacks of evil), what can you do as a repentant believer to be restored to a position of spiritual protection and renewed victory? (Note I John 2: 1-2))**
31. **When will all believers find and enjoy ultimate protection from the presence (and temptation) of all evil? (Revelation 20:10)**
32. **Share with others (possibly in your 'small group') what your response is to some (or all) of the following Scriptures which promise God's loving protection of His children: Deuteronomy 33: 27; Isaiah 41: 10; Isaiah 46: 4; Romans 8: 37-39.**

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NOTES