

# DIARY OF A WOMAN



A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

*Sebra W. Ferrell*

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*by*

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*To my Father in heaven, His Son, Jesus, who is my Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit who dwells in me. Thank You for loving me and seeing me through these times. May the words of my heart bless others as You have blessed me. In Jesus' name.*

*Amen*

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## INTRODUCTION

All my life I have written to express what's inside of me. So, as I began my journey with Christ, in all earnestness, I began to write as my way of studying His word. This collection contains some of those writings, with the first of them being from October 1999 and spanning the next five years. What you have before you now is my heart: the introductory poem; the things God has and is continually working to develop in my life, especially over these last few years; an explanation of what made a difference for me, though it is not in my own words; and a song of my heart that was birthed one quiet day along this journey.

Over time, as I have continued to read these writings for my own personal growth, God has shown me new things, and, where appropriate, I have made some edits from the original documents. I have added new revelations where I felt prompted, though I am sure there is much more to learn than what is contained herein. I have also made some grammatical and other editorial changes for better clarity. However, the context of what you read has not changed much. I pray as you read them, His Holy Spirit will do in your heart that which is purposed for your life.

There are seven chapters enclosed with two types of writings: personal scripture studies and miscellaneous writings of my heart. I dedicate each chapter to my husband, for it was from his wisdom they were birthed. Thank you Father for a wise man of God. And, I dedicate the scripture studies to my mother, as she likes to call them "epistles". She is not only my mother, but she is my friend, and I truly thank God for her.

The scripture studies are times I went into God's word seeking to understand what He was saying to me about a particular subject or verse. Sometimes, it was an area I was struggling in. Sometimes, it was just something I read that intrigued me. And, sometimes, it was because it was something my husband told me to study. Overall, they tend to be very in-depth, but are free flowing in that what I thought I wrote. This allowed me to capture most of what I experienced along the way.

The writings of the heart are different things placed on my heart over the years. They are more free flowing, and typically not as scripture oriented, but definitely contain principles God has worked in my life and revelations I believe He has given me. I believe each is included according to God's purpose and whom He knows will read this collection. And, I pray as each of you read this dairy, of a portion of my life - the struggles, the victories, the lessons learned - it will be manna to your spirit and food for your soul. May each of you prosper as your soul prospers.



## SEARCH MY HEART

*Search my heart, O God and show me the truth  
The things in me which do not glorify You  
Bring them to the surface to take them away  
That I may serve You, each and every day*

*May I walk in Your light, in Your perfect will  
Till death overtakes me and time stands still  
For my body, this shell, my life here on earth  
Now empty returns to this ground made of dirt*

*I beseech You O Lord to perfect me in You  
That Your word shines forth for others to view  
It will not be easy, this I know  
But, with it, Your heavenly glory will flow*

*Through me to them, may Your perfect will be done  
Thy Kingdom in Heaven, on earth will it come  
That lives may be changed and hearts may be healed  
By Your power, Your glory, Your wonder revealed*

*Take my heart, O God and show me the truth  
The things in me which do not glorify You  
Bring them to the surface, I give them away  
That I may serve You, each and every day*

## **CHAPTER ONE – IN THE BEGINNING**

## HOW TO INHERIT THE POWER AND BLESSINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

In order to inherit the power and the blessings of Jesus Christ, we must first know who He is, why He came, and what that meant.

To know who Jesus is, let us examine the Word of God:

(Genesis 1:26 NIV) *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

(John 1:1-5 NIV) *<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

(John 1:10-14 NIV) *<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup>He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--<sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

(Matthew 1:20-21 NIV) *<sup>20</sup>But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

(1 John 5:1-8 NIV) *<sup>1</sup>Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. <sup>2</sup>This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. <sup>3</sup>This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup>for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. <sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup>the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.*

These verses teach us the Word was with God in the beginning. God said, “Let us,” not “Let me.” This also teaches us Jesus was flesh and blood and was born of the Holy Spirit, who is a part of the “Us” God referred to in Genesis. The King James Version of the bible teaches there are three that bear witness in heaven: The Father, The Word {Son}, and The Holy Ghost. However, I have to make note the NIV bible does not contain this text. There is a note in the NIV that states: *“testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth: the” is not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century.*” However, further study of the scripture will teach about the Trinity of God, so for this lesson, we will have three that bear witness, and in each version, Jesus is accounted for as either the Son or the blood. For it is the blood of Jesus that saves us, which takes us to the next step.

We know Jesus was in the beginning, that he is part of a triune that testifies in heaven, “triune” meaning “three”, and He is the Word that became flesh. But, why did He become flesh?

To know why Jesus became flesh, we have to study the Fall of Man, the results of that fall, the sacrifices in the Old Testament, and the ultimate sacrifice of the New Testament.

Genesis, Chapter 3 teaches us about the fall of man. God had commanded Adam to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:16-17). However, the serpent beguiled Eve into eating from that very tree (3:4-6). Eve then gave to Adam who also ate (3:6). When this happened, they knew they were naked and were eventually driven from the Garden of Eden so they may not eat from the Tree of Life and live forever (3:22-23).

Just think about it. Adam and Eve had a personal relationship with God. He had commanded Adam to not eat a certain fruit. The bible does not teach God had given the commandment directly to Eve, though it does teach she knew God had said this (3:3). God may have told her personally, or it may have been conveyed through her husband. Nevertheless, they broke the commandment and changed the world forever: sin entered in. And, God had to reconcile man back to Himself. The need for the Savior was born.

(Romans 5:6-11 NIV) <sup>6</sup>*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup>For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup>Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

(2 Corinthians 5:18-21 NIV) <sup>18</sup>*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>We are therefore*

*Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

*(Colossians 1:19-22 NIV) <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. <sup>21</sup>Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation....*

*(Matthew 28:18 NIV) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

These scriptures teach us Jesus reconciled us back to the Father through His blood. First, let us note the importance of the blood as it relates to the sacrifices in the Old Testament found in Exodus and Leviticus. Because of these sacrifices, let us know that without the shedding of blood, there can be no atonement for sin (Hebrews 9:22). In fact, Hebrews teaches us Jesus was the final and perfect sacrifice for sin (7:27 and Chapter 11). He was obedient to God, even unto death (Philippians 2:8), dying for us – sinners. Not because people had earned this, but because of God's love for us (John 3:16). Think about it. Take a moment and truly let it sink into your heart the magnitude of this wonderful gift given to us. Here was a man who had all power, yet He chose to die, to die for us because of His Father's love for us. Let us not overlook Jesus declared from His own lips He was given "all authority." So, if He has all authority, and He died for our sins, how do we get that same authority?

*(Romans 10:9 NIV) That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

*(John 14:6 NIV) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

*(Romans 8:14-17 NIV) <sup>14</sup>because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

*(Galatians 3:26-27 NIV) <sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

*(Galatians 4:6-7 NIV) <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

First, we have established by confessing “*with your mouth that ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and [believing] in your heart that God raised him from the dead*” is how you become saved. Since other scriptures in the bible teach us the power of words, we need to understand the importance of confessing with our mouths. For was not the world created with God’s words? Do we not have the same power of life and death in our words? Yes, to both. But, for now, we need to know we must confess with our mouth and believe in our heart. Once we have done that, we have attained salvation through Christ Jesus who established to get to the Father we must go through Him. Jesus is the key to all things for with Him as our strength, we can do all things (Philippians 4:13). We have also established, with this salvation, we become heirs of God and are now entitled to all the promises of God found in His Holy Word. This is the first step to obtaining the power and the blessings of Jesus Christ. The next step is faith.

(Hebrews 11:6 NIV) *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

## THE POWER OF FAITH

What is faith? Where does it come from? How do you increase it? How do you get the power of faith?

(Hebrews 11:1 KJV) *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

(Romans 10:17 KJV) *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

There is so much to faith that only time, continued study, and revelation from the Spirit can reveal to each of us. But, just to start, the scriptures above teach us that faith is what we have no matter what the situation looks like (evidence of things not seen). They teach us that to have faith, you have to get it from the word of God.

And, there are different types of faith described in the scriptures: no faith, faith, little faith, and great faith, each bearing it's own fruits.

### NO FAITH

(Deuteronomy 32:20 KJV) *And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.*

(Mark 4:40 KJV) *And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*

### FAITH

(Matthew 17:20 KJV) *And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

### LITTLE FAITH

(Matthew 6:30 KJV) *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

(Matthew 8:26 KJV) *And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

(Matthew 14:31 KJV) *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

(Matthew 16:8) *Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?*

## GREAT FAITH

(Matthew 8:10 KJV) *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

(Matthew 15:28 KJV) *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

So, what do we have? The fruit of no faith is fear and the Lord hiding His face from us. The fruit of faith is the power to move mountains. Some teach this is a parable, and the mountains represent the trials of life; others teach this is in the literal sense of moving the very mountain. Nevertheless, the fruit is the same. The fruit of little faith is the same as the fruit of no faith: fear – along with the doubt and worry. But, then, there's great faith. Great faith heals and casts out demons. Just think about it. To move the mountains in your life, all you need is faith – faith without doubting, because the scriptures above teach us what happens when we doubt.

Take Peter, for example. Matthew 14:25-31 tells us the story of Jesus walking on the water to the boat. When the disciples saw Him, they were afraid and thought He was a spirit. But, Peter asked Jesus *if* it was Him to tell him, Peter, to come, which Jesus did. Peter stepped out of the boat on faith in the word of Jesus. But, then he looked around and saw the trials of life (the winds boistering up around him), and he became AFRAID. What happened next? Peter SANK and had to cry out to the Lord to save him. Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand and saved Peter. How many times in our lives are we like Peter? We step out on faith and start walking towards Jesus, but then we take our eyes off Him and pay attention to the trials of life instead. We get depressed, discouraged, fearful, and all those other things that are not of God. We sink! But, when we cry out to Jesus to help us, He always does. Time and time again.

And, all of this is just operating on faith as small as the grain of a mustard seed. That's not a lot of faith. And, the scriptures teach us in John 14:12-14, <sup>12</sup>*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.* <sup>13</sup>*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* <sup>14</sup>*If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*" (KJV). What was Jesus doing? He was casting out demons and healing the sick. And, we can do those things by having great faith in Jesus.

There is much to absorb, much to be written on our hearts. Because, until these things are written in our hearts, they cannot go forth, for Mark 7:19 teaches us that what's in our hearts is what comes out.

So, what is faith? Faith is knowing and trusting in the word of God.

Because, then we know God did not give us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

And, we know there is no temptation we will go through except that which is common to man; that God is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted above what we can handle; and He will make a way for us to escape, so we can bear the temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We know that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6).

We know! We trust! We have faith! And, with that faith comes power to move mountains. And, faith in Jesus brings the power to cast out demons and to heal. Praise God for His word!

## THE KEYS TO GOD'S HOUSE

I believe there are certain keys that open the door to and the doors in "God's house." I believe those keys are: Jesus, salvation, faith, baptism, and the Holy Spirit. Let us examine.

### JESUS

(Matthew 1:21 KJV) *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

### SALVATION

(Romans 10:9 KJV) *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

### FAITH

(Romans 10:17 KJV) *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

### BAPTISM

(Matthew 28:18-19 KJV) <sup>18</sup>*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. <sup>19</sup>Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost....*

### THE HOLY SPIRIT

(John 7:37-39 KJV) <sup>37</sup>*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. <sup>38</sup>He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. <sup>39</sup>(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

As we journey through life, we hear about so many aspects of the Kingdom of God. And, although the Kingdom is a lesson within itself, I'd like to narrow the scope here. For, I believe there scriptures teach there is a certain key we must have to enter the Kingdom and there are other keys we need to unlock different doors to access the power God would have us to arm ourselves with. Otherwise, we go into battle without all our armour. And, what does the bible say about that?

(Ephesians 6:10-11 KJV) *Finally, my bretheren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Now, let's find out how to unlock the doors that hold our armour. The first key I believe the bible teaches us about is who Jesus is and His role in our initial entry into the Kingdom. Based on the studies so far, I believe the answer is Jesus is the Word of God made flesh and by confessing Romans 10:9, we receive salvation. So, salvation is the key that unlocks the front door to God's house. Without it, you can go no further. We've entered the house, but all the rooms are still locked.

So, what unlocks the inner doors to God's house? Faith. For without faith, we have nothing to stand on. Hebrews 11:1 teaches us that faith is what gives us hope: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (KJV). If we don't have faith, how can we have hope? In all honesty, there are very few things, if any, we control in our lives. We can make decisions that affect the course of our lives. But, if you really think about it, what do you really control? The word of God teaches us in Luke 12:31 we have to seek the Kingdom of God first so all the things of life (clothes, food, etc.) can be added unto us. And, we learn in Romans 5:2 and Hebrews 3:6 that we *"rejoice in the hope of the glory of God"* and *"Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."*

So, what does that tell me? That we have to have hope in something outside of our control: God through His word and His Son, Jesus. This hope is what keeps us going each day, knowing Jesus set an example for us to follow (John 13:15). *<sup>3</sup>For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. <sup>4</sup>For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope* (Romans 15:3-4 KJV). Knowing God is faithful, and He will not let anything happen to us we are unable to bear, and in all things, He will provide us a means to escape so we can bear whatever it is (1 Corinthians 10:13). He's not just going to leave us out there defenseless, but WE have to know that. We have to know His Word and His promises to sustain that hope. That hope sustains our faith, and our faith sustains that hope; they are inseparable. But, we also have to remember our salvation allowed us entry into God's house that we may have hope, and our faith allows us to journey down it's hallways.

No matter how discouraged I get, and when I began this lesson, I was down and discouraged, I have hope when I remember 1 Corinthians 10:13. I know God has called me to do certain things. I know He has called me to make a difference in a generation with my husband through our children. Sometimes, it seems so hard and so far away, but, then, I look at my relationship with my son, Jose Jr., and I know without God's help, we would not be where we are. I know without God's help, Jose Jr., would not be where he is. No, he's not perfect, nor am I, but he has settled down within himself a lot. And, God has used both him and my husband to teach me many things. But, it's not over, because I continue to learn through my family. For that, I praise the Lord!

I have hope that my walk with God in my life and marriage will make a difference in the choices my children will someday make. I have faith the less I become, the more Jesus will become and that is what will make a difference. I have to walk in that faith, that hope, every minute of every day or Satan will continue to attack and discourage me until one day I quit. For, the word teaches us in Hebrews 3:13, *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (KJV). This is a daily walk. So, we have to be determined TODAY, not yesterday, or tomorrow, but TODAY, and only I can make that choice for me. And, by knowing where I am and what God has delivered me from, it gives me hope TODAY!

So, we’re saved, and we have faith. But, what does that have to do with baptism? A lot! Even Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17).

(Romans 6:3-4 KJV) *<sup>3</sup>Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

There is a lot of division in the church about baptism, how to baptize, whether or not immersion is necessary. This teaching can become very complex, but let’s keep it simple. First, we’ll examine what Jesus said do. Then, we’ll examine how Jesus, Himself, was baptized. First, Jesus tells us in Matthew 28:18 all authority has been given unto Him and we are to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. However, all baptisms done by the disciples were done in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38, 10:48, 19:5, etc.) So, we can debate all day, or we can pray and ask God for guidance. For me, my answer is Jesus is the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for it is the name we were given to call on (John 14:13, 15:16, 16:23, etc.) Thus, the disciples baptized into the name that would give us power and unlock the doors to God’s house.

Now, let’s examine when Jesus was baptized. Matthew 13:16 teaches us Jesus *“went up out of the water.”* To go up and out of the water, one must be down and under the water – immersed. So, to be baptized in the same manner as Jesus, immersion is required. The scriptures from Romans help to clarify this. If we are immersed, then we can identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ through our baptism. Because I can surely tell you how I felt when I chose to be baptized through immersion. Even though it was but for a moment, I knew I did not come up, I would die. I believe in that moment I died to sin, and when I came up, I arose to Christ. I believe I opened another doorway in God’s house.

But, that’s not the last doorway to be opened. There’s the doorway to the Holy Spirit. Which comes first, baptism or receiving the Holy Spirit is not important. There are examples in Acts where people are baptized and then receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:12-17, 19:1-6) and examples where people receive the Holy Spirit and then get baptized (Acts 9:17-18, 10:44). I myself received the Holy Spirit a few months ago, with evidence of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:9, 10:46, 19:6); however, I was baptized last night, 21 October 1999. The point is the Holy Spirit is the key that unlocks all the remaining doors in God’s house.

(John 16:7-16 KJV) <sup>7</sup>Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. <sup>8</sup>And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup>Of sin, because they believe not on me; <sup>10</sup>Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; <sup>11</sup>Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup>I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. <sup>14</sup>He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. <sup>15</sup>All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. <sup>16</sup>A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

As the scriptures above show us, the Holy Spirit is all things to us. He is our Comforter. He is the One who convicts us of sin. He is the One who guides us and teaches us what God wants us to know. He is the One who changes us. He is the true power in our lives! For, we cannot do anything by ourselves, but through Christ, we can do all things (Philippians 4:13), and it's the Holy Spirit who gives us power (Acts 1:8). Furthermore, Romans 15:13, tells us, "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*" (KJV). That, to me, says it all. For God is the God of hope, and our hope comes by the power of the Holy Spirit. Praise God!

Now, to conclude today's journey, let's back up a little bit. We've concluded the first key to opening the front door of God's house is to confess and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior over our lives. Sometimes, we do that in times past, but then stray a long way from Him. We believe we are still saved, so there's no need to make that confession again. We get caught up in our religious beliefs concerning "once saved, always saved," so we harden our hearts when we hear the voice of God calling us. So many times, I did this myself. I felt the pull of the Lord, but felt I had confessed Him before, so I didn't have to confess Him again. I'd rededicated my life to Him, so I didn't have to do it again. But, anytime your life is not right...Anytime you feel like your disconnected from Him...Anytime you feel like you need to be renewed in your walk with God, confess Jesus! Or, if you've never actually confessed Jesus from Romans 10:9 with your mouth, please do so TODAY! If you don't know what to say, please see the prayer in the conclusion to help guide you. He will come into your heart and open or reopen doors so you can start your journey TODAY and receive the blessings God has intended just for you!

## THE HOUSE THAT FAITH BUILT

We've all heard the story about the three little pigs and the houses they built. One was made of straw; one was made of wood, and the other was made of brick – only the brick house stood up to the big bad wolf. Well, Satan and his demons are our big bad wolves, so what kind of house are we going to build to stand up to him? Let's examine the parable in Mark about the sower, how it relates to the types of houses we build, and how that relates to our faith.

(Mark 4:3-8 KJV) <sup>3</sup>Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: <sup>4</sup>And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. <sup>5</sup>And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: <sup>6</sup>But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup>And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. <sup>8</sup>And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

### HOMELESS

(Mark 4:15 KJV) *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

Most people know the seed is the Word of God, and the ground is our heart. In verse 4, the seed didn't have anywhere particular to land; it didn't have a home. It just fell along the path. As Jesus described it in verse 15, it fell "*by the way side*" and was gobbled up by the birds. That's how we are sometimes: homeless to the Word of God. We don't provide it shelter. We don't even allow it to enter our hearts. It gets to the front porch (our minds), but it doesn't take up residence (in our hearts). It's just like going out to get your morning paper – someone else beat you to it.

So why does this happen? Probably the biggest cause is a lack of understanding. Proverbs 4:7 teaches us, "*and with all thy getting get understanding.*" If you don't understand the Word, you can't sow it in your heart. You can quote the scriptures from cover to cover, but with no understanding, there is no power. As Jesus puts it in Mark 4:11-12, "*He told them, 'The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding: otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!''*" (NIV).

### STRAW HOUSE

(Mark 4:16 KJV) <sup>16</sup>And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; <sup>17</sup>And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when

*affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.*

And, then there are times we hear the Word, and even have understanding, but we can't withstand the troubles or persecutions that come our way. We've provided the Word shelter in our straw house, but it can't withstand the simplest test of time. So, what do the scriptures teach on this?

*(Romans 5:1-5 KJV) <sup>1</sup>Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup>By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; <sup>4</sup>And patience, experience; and experience, hope: <sup>5</sup>And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

If we never have trials and tribulations, why would we need faith? We would be able to control everything and would always be blissfully happy. What glory can God receive in that kind of situation? But, as the scriptures above from Romans teach us, tribulations teach us how to have patience, which teaches us to gain experience. And, last but not least, that experience is what gives us reason to hope! And, what is faith? *"The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1 KJV). Until God has delivered you from something, how will you ever know He can? And, let's not forget 1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches us God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able, and in that temptation, He always provides a means of escape, so we can bear it.

## WOOD HOUSE

*(Mark 4:18-19 KJV) <sup>18</sup>And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, <sup>19</sup>And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

Well, we've given the Word shelter, but the shelter couldn't protect the Word very long. So, now, we're up to our wood house. It's a little sturdier, so it lasts longer. But, once again, it doesn't adequately shelter the Word. We get caught up in the "stuff" of life. So many preachers use that word these days, that it's hard not to, because it adequately wraps it all up into a neat little package. What's my stuff? My children, my job, my husband, keeping my house clean, etc., etc., etc! But, what does stuff do for me in comparison to the blessings of God. Absolutely nothing! *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33 KJV). Remember that one? Oh, how soon I forget. So, my house stands a little longer than it used to, but I haven't built my house of brick yet.

## BRICK HOUSE

(Mark 4:20 KJV) *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

Now, that's what I'm talking about. This is when we bring the Word into a strong house. A house that can withstand the wiles of the devil. We've planted our seed (Word) into good ground (our heart), and we bring forth fruit. There is the fruit of the Spirit: *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22). And, lately, a lot of ministries have been preaching on the fruits of prosperity. But, I haven't graduated to that yet, so I'll stick with the fruit of the Spirit, because without those, you don't really know the Holy Spirit has taken up full-time residence in His brick house. For, is not a tree known by its fruit?

(Matthew 7:20 KJV) *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

But! We can't forget the todayness of it all. We can't be deceived that once we've built the house of brick, we can stop. We have to remember to keep it up through prayer, study, and fellowship with God.

So, I ask myself, how do I build my brick house? Let's go back to the title: "The House That Faith Built." Now, when I search my bible software for faith it comes up 270 times in 246 verses in the NIV version; King James Version equals 247 times in 231 verses. That's a lot of times, no matter how you slice the cake. But, the one verse, for me, that is truly beginning to make sense is Hebrews 11:1 – *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Why do I keep going back to that? Because, it's so easy to overlook some key things in this verse.

First, I've had to realize the importance of the *"evidence of things not seen."* Just because you don't see something materializing the way YOU think it should, does not mean God is not at work.

(Philippians 2:13 KJV) *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

We may can't see what His master plan is, but there is always one. The things we go through may be painful to us, but He has to refine us.

(1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV) *<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup>These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

So, the only way to truly know you have faith is to be able to do like James 1:2-4 tells us, and that's to count it all joy, because patience is on the other side of that faith situation. And, nothing can help you change the complexion of a situation faster than praising God.

In those times I can do that, I can lift up praise and worship to God even when I don't feel like it, even when all I want to do is have myself one big luxurious pity party, I've found those are the times things break the quickest. So, as this one song says, "when times get hard, start praising God!"

Now, how will you sow your next seeds? To be homeless. To live in a straw or wooden house. Or, will you sow your next seeds to build a house of brick that will stand?! For....."*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). Plant a seed today and start laying your foundation!

## **CHAPTER TWO – IN THE WILDERNESS**

## AND NOW I CAN SEE

I went to church today. I recently moved, so I haven't been in awhile. When I have gone, I went to the chapel on base. The very first message I heard was entitled "Motivation for Ministry". That was really surprising for me, because accepting the call I feel into the ministry has been very hard for me. One, sometimes it's hard to not get full of myself, because we often forget God calls us into the ministry to serve and not to be served. And, second, because I am a woman, and it's hard to deal with my feelings about women in the ministry and my calling. But, I believe God has worked it all out inside of me. See, just because I am a woman doesn't mean there aren't things God has given me to share with others. There are so many women hurting in the body of Christ. There are so many men that hurt because of the women they love. And, there are so many women that hurt because of the men. That's why I believe God has given Jose and I the marriage and the testimony He has, so we can help others. We are both called into ministry, each with a different purpose, and some day, in God's timing, He will move us where He wants us to be.

But today, church was very special. The scripture was John 9:1-26 today, and as I was reading through the text, the Holy Spirit was revealing some wonderful things to me. The first thing He revealed to me was it takes the anointing – Christ - for us to see. You see, the man accepted the clay Jesus anointed his eyes with. For us, it takes accepting the anointing (Christ) to bring us into the light and out of the darkness. One of the things said is the man was in the darkness; Christ sent him to take an action, and then there was the light. Darkness. Action. Light. It takes an action by us while we're still in the darkness to ever get into the light. See, Jesus sent the man to take an action. The action we must take when Jesus introduces Himself to us while we are yet in our sins is to accept Him as Lord and Savior of our life. We must be obedient like the blind man, and do what Jesus tells us to do.

Some of the things the Chaplain brought out were how the blind man didn't see Jesus, but Jesus saw him. The disciples asked Jesus who sinned, the man or his parents, because the man was born blind. And, Jesus replied neither of them had sinned, but it was so the work of God could be made manifest in him. See, we come into this world, and we live our lives with all of our issues to deal with. And, all of those issues are so God's work can be made manifest in us. We go through the things we do so we can reach back and bring someone else out (2 Corinthians 1:4). But, we will never truly make it through without the Holy Spirit. Yes, we can put bandages on our problems, but without the Holy Spirit, the problems inevitably come back.

That's the second part of what He showed me in church. After Jesus anointed the man's eyes, He told him to go and wash himself in the pool of Siloam, which means "sent." I found that part about the pool meaning "sent" very interesting. I know there is something deeper in there than what I am seeing at this moment, but I know it will come in time. Another thing brought out is if we want to receive a blessing from God, we have to go where He sends us – wherever that may be. In listening to this, the Holy Spirit revealed to me the washing represents us being washed by the Holy Spirit. Him whom the Father sent to us as our Comforter. Anyway, before I get into that, I need to go back and say what the Holy Spirit revealed to me is it takes the anointing to draw us and the washing by the Holy Spirit for us to see. Now, moving to my next thought.

Jesus told us He would send us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. In John 14:16, He tells us if we love Him, we will keep His commandments **AND** He *“will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”* (underline added for emphasis). His praying for the Father to send us the Comforter is preceded by **AND**. That means it’s conditional, and it’s conditional on our keeping His commandments.

If we go back to what it takes for us to accept Jesus, Romans 10:9, it tells us if we confess with our mouth the LORD Jesus, **AND** believe in our heart God raised Him from the dead, **THEN** we will be saved. First, we must confess the LORD Jesus. This is talking about His Lordship, or rule, over our lives. And in order for Him to rule over our lives, we must be willing to keep His commandments. It’s the same thing as showing our parents, and even our mate, we love them by doing the things they ask, and not doing the ones they ask you not to. See, that’s the philosophy by which my husband has raised our children. Teach them through their hearts to obey you and not always through fear. Fear will only make them do right while they are afraid of you, but love will make them do right long after they leave your home. It was hard for me to see that, but God’s plan is so perfect. I’m not saying it doesn’t require discipline, because it does. God disciplines us. He sets boundaries in our lives for our protection. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Flee fornication. Thou shalt not steal. All of the don’ts are for our protection, because in His perfect wisdom, He sees what we cannot see. But, He wraps it all up in His love. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

Yes, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and it’s the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10). But, only the Spirit of Truth – the Holy Spirit can give us revelation knowledge. That’s why the man had to wash his eyes in the pool of Sent. For the Holy Spirit is sent to us to wash us. He enables us to keep God’s commandments. He sanctifies us so we may be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

So often, Christians say what makes us different from the world is we are forgiven. Yes, we are forgiven. But, it took action by the blind man in order to see the light. It takes action by us in order to be able to truly see the Kingdom of God. We have to be washed by the water of the word of God and enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive the truth of God’s words into our heart. We can make all the excuses in the world for our sins, but there is no excuse, because it’s just this simple.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). But, if we make excuses for our sins, then why did He die on the cross. That we may stay in bondage to sin. That we may continue to live entrapped by Satan’s snares. **NO!!!!** He died, so we could be free. Not free to sin, but free **FROM** sin. Freed by our confession of Jesus **AND** our confession when the Holy Spirit reveals our sins to us. Free from the control Satan gained in the earth from Adam and Eve. Jesus took control back and gave us the victory.

We are joint heirs with Christ. He, through His life, set the example, and through His death and resurrection enables us each day to live a holy and acceptable life before the Father, who looks down at us and sees the blood His Son shed for us. If we continue to make a mockery of that blood by staying in our sin, then why? Why? Why should Jesus have died for us?

He suffered. He died. He arose again, so we would not have to suffer. No, this life is not easy, because we live in the flesh, and the suffering we go through is suffering that kills the flesh. But, our spirit lives and grows and reaches out to the Father. The Holy Spirit lives in us. The Son shines through us by all the Holy Spirit enables us to do. Why cannot we not see that? Why do we continue to pollute our precious temples with alcohol and cigarettes and even chocolate. Yes, I said chocolate. Every time I reach for a candy bar because I'm stressed, I am just as guilty of the blood of Jesus as the person that reaches for a cigarette. Yes, I am!

No, we won't go through this life without some kind of fleshly struggle. But, it's intended to bring out the image of Christ in us. It's not intended to harm us, but to transform us into the image of the One who died for us. He gave His life for us. Why can't we give our life for Him?

He finds us in our blindness, and He tells us what to do in order to see. Yet, we are not obedient to Him and continue to make excuses for what we want to do. We don't walk in His will. We walk in our flesh, not remembering God told us NO FLESH will glorify in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29). And, what is the greater joy? To make excuses for our weaknesses or to walk in the Spirit of Him that created us, Him that died on the cross for us. Oh, what joy to feel the presence of the Lord in our lives! Oh, what joy when I can feel His warmth wrapping me in His arms! Oh, what joy when I can feel the power of His Spirit moving through me! Oh, what joy! There is nothing in this world or of this world that can compare. Not a smoke. Not a drink. Not a candy bar. Nothing! So, why continue to make excuses?

Father, forgive us for we know not what we do.

## JOHN 12:37-50

(John 12:37-50 KJV) <sup>37</sup>“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: <sup>38</sup>That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>39</sup>Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, <sup>40</sup>**He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart;** that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. <sup>41</sup>These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. <sup>42</sup>Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: <sup>43</sup>**For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.** <sup>44</sup>Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. <sup>45</sup>And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. <sup>46</sup>I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. <sup>47</sup>And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup>He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. <sup>49</sup>For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. <sup>50</sup>And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

I found this passage of scripture to be so enlightening and nourishment to my soul. I highlighted and underlined those parts that really caught my attention. See, if you reflect on life today, you will find many of us are this way. We see the miracles of God, but we don't believe in Him. I'm not just talking about the miraculous things He does in the earth, I am talking about the miracle of life – all He has created is a miracle within itself. The fact that there are billions of people in the world, yet no two of them are exactly alike – that's a miracle. I'm talking about how everything in life works on this perfect system we try to attribute to a big bang theory. That's a miracle. If you look at all the things around you in nature – look at yourself, and discover the miracles of God. Then, when you see the other miracles that come today from the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you will be even more tremendously amazed than before.

But, just as when God sent Isaiah, the prophet, forth, He told Isaiah to tell the people “*Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn to be healed*” (Isaiah 6:9-10 NIV). Sometimes, I think the very same thing happens today. God will send someone forth with His words. Words that should cause us to turn from the idols we have built up in our hearts, and the false gods we have come to worship. Instead, their words cause our hearts to harden against the truth, because our eyes continue to see what we want to see; our ears continue to hear what they want to hear. We will seek those who will tell us the things we want to hear to continue to justify the sin that has now hidden behind the strongholds we have created.

We have created fortresses in our minds that have hardened our hearts against God's truth. Behind the gates of these fortresses lies Satan, laughing at our deception.

“Oh, yes, my child, stay in the darkness. Oh, yes, my child, keep the light out. Don’t accept Jesus. He will heal you. He will set you free. You will no longer be bound and held prisoner to the sins I have hidden in my stronghold – in my fortress you have created in your mind. Yes, the wall is solid. Your eyes are dull; your ears are deaf. You cannot see the truth. You cannot hear the truth. For, you want to stay in the darkness. You are afraid of the light. You are afraid to let go of the things I have hidden in your heart. Yes, my child, stay with the fear. Didn’t you know? God told you perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). But, if you love, then you have to put someone before you. You are no longer first in your life. Someone else is. But, that’s not acceptable. That doesn’t fit behind the stronghold I have built. My fortress cannot accommodate that love. No, my child. I am your Father. I will not release you to be free. I will not release you to serve Him who has created you. I am only the Father of all lies. Yet, you continue to believe me. You continue to let me live in my fortresses I have built up. You continue to justify your sins. You make excuses, and with each excuse, you allow me to put one more brick in the wall of my fortress. Oh, yes, I thank you. Please, make another excuse. Allow me to put up another brick. Oh, yes. There it is. ‘It’s okay for me to smoke. God hasn’t told me not to. He only said my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.’ But, you have excuses for it. You like to smoke. It relaxes you. It’s not an idol in your heart. You have not placed it above God. You do not worship it more than God. No, not you. You’re just fine the way you are. So, you continue to smoke – not realizing Satan is laughing at you. No, it’s not the smoking that’s going to send you to hell. It’s the condition of your heart that sends you to hell. The smoking is just a by-product of what’s in your heart. But, okay, let’s say, smoking is one of those controversial things we can’t prove by the word of God. We can work that. I like that. I can continue to keep your eyes closed. No problem. But, hey, let’s move on to something that is clearly established in the word of God. He teaches you not to fornicate. He even tells you every other sin is done outside of the body, but that one. So, with that, we will say smoking is okay. Because after all, God said the only sin committed with the body is fornication. Cool. I like that. So, let’s see how we keep your eyes dull and your ears deaf and put another brick, several bricks in my stronghold. How about, ‘It feels good?’ How about, ‘I have to take a test drive?’ How about, ‘Everyone is doing it?’ Oh, so many excuses. And, here’s one of my all time favorites – ‘We’re engaged; it’s okay.’ Oh, how you deceive yourself. Oh, my child, please continue to believe my lies, so you may stay in the darkness with me. Please continue to gossip. Please continue to get angry and not make amends with those whom you allow to control you through anger. Please, don’t check yourself daily against the word of God so He, and He alone, can judge your sins with His word. Please stay ignorant. Didn’t He say, ‘My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge?’ Yes, my child. I will be your Father. Not He that created you.”

Oh, God, how we don’t see the truth. How we don’t receive your words. You didn’t send your Son to judge us, but You sent Him to save us. His words will judge us. When we reject Him, we reject You. When we reject those who come into our lives to speak God’s words to us, we don’t

reject them, we reject You. For once we have accepted Jesus, we have now become ministers of reconciliation. We are to encourage one another with Your word. We are to help each other to learn the truth, because the truth will set us free. We don't see. We don't hear. We don't understand the more we accept the Lordship of Jesus in our lives, the more truth we can receive, the more free we will be in Him, because we will have the freedom to do the things we want to do, but our desires will be towards You, not to the things of the flesh.

Oh, God, help us to see. Help us to learn. Please Father, open our eyes. Please Father, open our ears. Let us see. Let us hear. Let us receive Your truth. Let us receive Jesus. Let our hearts be made flesh that Jesus may dwell in us, and His light shine forth from us. Let us be His workman – representing You in all we do. Oh, Father, let Your words judge us now. And, let your word keep us from being judgmental. Let us remember it is Your word that will judge. Even Jesus did not come to judge, but to save. Let us go forth to save in a spirit of love and not with a spirit of judgment. Let us not reject Your word. And, let us understand those who reject us, do not reject us, but they reject You. Let us receive Your word. But, let us remember when we are the vessel You use for someone to receive Your word, they are not receiving us, they are receiving Jesus. Let us preach Jesus. Let us share Jesus. Let us receive Jesus. Oh, please Father, break the strongholds in our lives and set the captives free.

6 January 2002

I find it very interesting there are a lot of people preaching on sin in the body of Christ these days. And, it's not just about the "blatant" sins we are accustomed to hearing about it, but it's geared more towards obeying God. I have heard several sermons on Achan over the last several weeks. Before my pastor in Germany, I had never heard a sermon on Achan before, but that's not saying a lot. What it is saying is I have heard a lot of preaching confirming the things I was previously taught and the things that have been rolling around inside of me. But, I ask myself, "Is this because I want to hear these things?" Or, is this because this is what God has laid in the prophetic realm to be preached to His church.

I have struggled with the concepts of, "A saint is just a sinner who's been forgiven," "Christians aren't perfect; we're just forgiven," and "Saints are just sinners who fall down, but we get up." We don't find the concept of salvation in any of those catch phrases. This was highlighted today as I listened to Pastor Ed Young, from the TV ministry, "A Winning Walk" talk about how he believes the church is flying upside down and the bumper sticker, "Christians aren't perfect; we're just forgiven" perpetuates that. And, as I sat there and contemplated what he was discussing, I began to go in my mind to the word of God.

Romans 10:9-10, says if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, you shall be saved. Now, what you confess and what you believe are two separate issues addressed. It says if you confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth and believe in your heart God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It doesn't say you shall be forgiven, it says you shall be saved. I have to take a moment to ponder that. What does saved mean? When are we forgiven?

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Hmm. Very interesting. As I originally typed that scripture, I had in there, if we confess our sins one to another, but as I looked it up, that wasn't in there. Maybe that's in James. Let's look. Okay, there it is. James 5:16 says, *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* Do the words "sins" and "fault" trace back to the same word? "Fault" traces back to "paraptoma," which means "a side-slip (lapse or deviation), (unintentional) error or (willful) transgression:-fall, fault, offence, sin, trespass." Now, what about sins? What does it trace back to? Well, now, this word is "hamartia" which means "offense, sin(-ful)," and it originates from "hamartano," which means "to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), to err."

Okay, we have two different root words here we are looking at. Basically, sin is to miss the mark, and fault is unintentional error or willful transgression. So, what's the difference here? Honestly, I'm not sure. But, I can see "hamartano" (sin) talks about not sharing in the prize; whereas, "paraptoma" (fault) only talks about error or transgression – one being unintentional and one being willful. Father, I pray for a deeper revelation into this, and I ask for enlightenment by Your Holy Spirit, who is my Counselor, my Teacher, and my Guide to illuminate the truth of Your word. Father, let me see the truth You are revealing here.

1 John 1:9 promises us forgiveness for confessing our sins and promises us cleansing of all unrighteousness. James 5:16 advises us to confess our faults to one another AND pray for one another, so we may be healed. Okay. If we tell our brothers and sisters what we are going through (unintentional errors or willful transgressions), we have someone who can pray for us that we may be healed from that fault. But, until we confess that fault – that what we are doing is sin – we cannot be forgiven. There's a difference in telling someone your faults and confessing your sins. Right now, I really need a dictionary, but the word fault to me implies that it's something that isn't perfect, but you can live with it. So, until it becomes sin to you, will you really want to let it go?

Father, help me to see what is right before my eyes. It's there. I can feel that it's there. Yet, there is something so much more, but I cannot quite put my "hands" on it. What fault do I have I have not confessed as sin to you? Please reveal to me those faults I need to confess as sin.

And why do You tell us to confess our sins, but to tell our faults one to another? You teach us for the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak (Romans 15:1). Is that because we are to tell each other our faults so the strong can pray for the weak? *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16) immediately follows us praying for one another. I find that most interesting. I believe there is more there than what I am seeing.

But, now, let's examine what Paul said about being a sinner. That still bugs me. The NIV text reads, *"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who believe on him and receive eternal life"* (1 Timothy 1:15-16). If you go up to verses 12-14, you read, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."* It's like Paul is saying, "This is what I was. I was the worst of sinners. But, Christ came into the world to save sinners. When He came into the world, I was a sinner, which is why I used the word 'am'. But, now, He has poured out His grace on me; He has shown me mercy. In me, the worst of sinners, He has shown what He could do by His grace and mercy!" It honestly doesn't seem as though Paul is saying he is still a sinner, but when Christ came he was the worst of sinners.

What I find interesting is when I look up the word "am", it traces back to "eimi," which means "I exist (used only when emphatic):am, have been." So, was he saying here the sinner in him still exists or was he saying "of whom I 'have been' the worst." Everything else I read indicates once we are saved, we are no longer sinners. This is the only reference I can find that implies we remain sinners, and after looking at it even deeper, I have to ask myself if that is what Paul was really saying anyway. The way it reads to me, I repeat to me, is Paul was trying to show how Jesus took the worst of sinners, poured out His grace and mercy upon him, THEN considered him faithful and appointed him into His service. Father, if I am wrong, please reveal this to me by Your Holy Spirit.

Now, let's go back to the beginning. Is it the blatant and the obvious sin in the church God is trying to deal with, or is it the simple fact of us being disobedient in any way to Him He is trying to deal with? Just before the September 11 attacks, I wrote, "Something that God Laid on My Heart". It addressed the state of our hearts more so than the sin in our lives. The sin generates from the heart, so I truly believe it's not the manifestation of the sin God is addressing as the root cause of the sin. I have been fixated on the root for awhile. I think I am beginning to understand what that means. It's not just the root of what's going on in me, but the root of what's wrong in the church. And, that goes back to what Prophetess Bynum said awhile back. God is dealing with our hearts – they are made of stone. We have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Oh, God! Oh, God in heaven! You are awakening me and opening my eyes. Oh, Father, that's why You dealt with me on spiritual adultery with regard to Praise and Worship. It's not the blatant things we do that are going to send us to hell. It's the state of our hearts. It's every time we hear Your word and disobey it. Our hearts become like stone. *"For if we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, For some, when they heard it, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt with Moses. But, with whom was he grieved froth years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief?"* (Hebrews 3:14-19).

We have hardened our hearts, because we continue to make excuses. We don't want to grow in Him. We want to use Him as a cover for our sins. And, I'm not talking about smoking, drinking, or sex. I'm talking about issues of the heart – issues of unbelief – issues that keep us from growing in Him and allow us to make excuses for our behavior – whatever that behavior is!!!

### **CHAPTER THREE – THE TRUTH OF HIS WORD**

As I was sitting there watching the Under Cover series by John Bevere, I noticed something as he was teaching on the serpent and how he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. I haven't yet finished listening to what he was saying, because I wanted to record the revelation I believe I received. First of all, notice the way the serpent approaches Eve. He asks her, "*Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?*" (Genesis 3:1 NIV). The KJV uses the word every, but the NIV portrays what I received more clearly. God had told Adam they could eat from "*any tree in the garden*" (2:16 NIV), *except* for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. What God presented was from a positive standpoint. He gave them an option of every tree except for one. Yet, when the serpent approached Eve, he took away all of her options, by claiming God had said they could not eat from any tree. I could speculate on what Eve felt, but I would not know for sure; however, I can say what I feel when I feel all my options have been taken away. I feel angry. I feel like I have lost total control over the situation. I feel my choices have been taken away, and I resent it. I wonder if this is what Eve felt. I will never know, but since the word of God is "*living and active*" (Hebrews 4:12 NIV), I believe this situation helps me to understand how the enemy comes at us and lures us into temptation.

James tells us we are "*drawn away of [our] own lust, and enticed*" (1:14). So, there had to be something within Eve the enemy could attack. Just as when we are going through things, the very first question we need to ask ourselves is, "What is within me the enemy is using against me?" It doesn't come from outside of us. It comes from within.

Let's go back to the Garden of Eden for a moment. God said they could eat from *every tree, but one*. The serpent's words seem to imply God had said they could not eat from any tree. Eve's reply was they could eat from every tree, except the one, but she didn't have a clear understanding of what God had said, because she added something to His words – "*neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die*" (Genesis 3:3 KJV). He didn't go back to the fact God said she couldn't eat of it. He didn't challenge God's authority to make that declaration. It seems to me, he challenged Eve's inadequate knowledge. At no point, did God say they could not touch it. Hosea 4:6 says, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee*" (KJV). It was the lack of knowledge of God's word that left Eve open to the serpent's craftiness, just as it is the lack of knowledge of His word that leaves us open to the wiles of the devil. "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he **may** devour*" (1 Peter 5:8 – bold print added for emphasis). He can only destroy us if we let him. He and the other agents of the kingdom of darkness search our weaknesses. They search out those areas in our lives where lust (of any kind) still lies. And, those are the areas we are attacked in. Those are the areas not covered by God's word. Those are the areas of our minds that have not been renewed by His word. "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*" (Romans 12:2 KJV).

I know every time I start to grow in God and think I have things all figured out, I find myself in a battle that normally leaves me worn, torn, and ready to quit. But, I thank God for the saints He has put in my life that are always there to impart His words into my life when I don't have the ears to hear for myself. These saints (and one in particular) always get me focused back on the

word of God. They get me to hear what He is trying to tell me. They get me to understand I am in a battle, and I have to *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41 KJV).

As long as I live in this flesh, there will be some part of my soul that lusts after something, and the enemy will always try to draw me out of God’s protection by distorting His word. And, from the scriptural examples of the Garden of Eden and Jesus in the wilderness, it’s not that He calls God a liar. It’s that He tries to use the word of God against us by trying to make us corrupt the word for own pleasures. Eve responded with the word, but it was not scripturally accurate. Eventually, she gave into her own lusts. Jesus responded with the word, and it was scripturally accurate. He withstood the test, I believe, proving the scripture, *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32 KJV).

### **ECCLESIASTES 9:11 AND MATTHEW 10:22**

(Ecclesiastes 9:11 KJV) *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

(Matthew 10:22 KJV) *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

Here we have two scriptures that are often combined. As I was typing in my journal tonight, the closing scripture was John 8:32 – “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” I once read a book on Intercessory Prayer that talked about how we misquote scriptures for so long we begin to quote them as gospel. Now, as I look at John 8:32, in light of what was in my heart tonight, I understand more about why it is so important to know, really know, the word of God. If I am quoting, “The race is not to the swift or the strong, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” and expecting God to perform His word (Jeremiah 1:12 and Isaiah 55:11), then I am waiting in vain, because this is not a promise God gave me. Even with John 8:32, we often hear, “and the truth shall set you free”, which is what the NIV version uses. But, when we look up the original word and it’s definition, here is what we find:

“eleutheroo, el-yoo-ther-o'-o; from (*another word that means*); to liberate, i.e. (figuratively) to exempt (from morally, certainty, or mortal liability):--deliver, make free”

Now, although “set” is used in the NIV version, I, personally, believe the concepts of “making” free and “setting” free are two different things. I recently heard a pastor preach on this very concept, which is what made me go and look it up for myself to see what the scripture actually says. The basic premise was you could set something free, but it not take advantage of its freedom. But, once something is made free, it really is free. My husband often refers to this as the slave mentality. If you have never been free, you don’t always know what to do or where to go once you are free, so you stay where you are, which was a very sad, but true fact following our nation’s Civil War. How often do we stay in sin, because we don’t understand Jesus has made us free by the blood that He shed for us?

(Hebrews 9:14 KJV) *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

(Hebrews 10:26-29 KJV) <sup>26</sup>*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,* <sup>27</sup>*But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* <sup>28</sup>*He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:* <sup>29</sup>*Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted*

*the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*

Unfortunately, different translations use different words, and in some instances, this is a good thing, because we can relate to it better. However, in some instances, the different translation uses a word (or combination of words) that just doesn't seem to convey the same thought and/or feeling as the King James Version. All in all, though, we are the most blessed of generations, because of all the technology and study materials available to us when it comes to the word of God. Yet, we are often too lazy to use what God has put before us, and rely on the pastor, our friend, or others to read, interpret, and in some cases, even live the word of God for us. How often do we come home from church and look up what the pastor said? How often do we pray and ask God for clarification of what the pastor said? I had someone ask that recently, and it really made me think. More often than not, we take what he says as gospel and never validate it against the word of God, especially if it agrees with our preconceptions of the truth. I know if I didn't understand something or it disagrees with my preconceptions, I will look it up. But, is that the only time I should look it up? Is that the only time I should pray over what was said? This sounds like a very dangerous way to live, because we are told to *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV).

There's that word "truth" again, it's the same word used in John 8:32, which by the way is the same word Jesus used when He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). First of all, I believe to the extent we know Jesus, we will know the truth. The more we learn of Him and the more of Him we accept in us, the more we will be ambassadors for Him, and the more He will shine out of us – His truth. So, why are we trying to find the truth without Jesus? Better yet, why are we trying to find the truth without the Holy Spirit? Did Jesus not tell us, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come?"* (John 16:13 KJV).

We have a God-given right to certain things, based on the scriptures. But, if we don't know these rights for ourselves, we will be just like Eve, misquoting God and getting into trouble. Instead, we are to be like the examples given to us – Jesus (the living Word of God) and the scriptures (the written word of God). When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He knew the truth, and the truth did "make" Him free, for the devil left His presence and angels came and ministered unto Him (Matthew 4:11).

(James 4:7 KJV) *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

And, thus is the walk of the Christian.

# EPHESIANS 4:29-32 AND EPHESIANS 5:3-5

(Ephesians 4:29-32 KJV) *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* <sup>30</sup>*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* <sup>31</sup>*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* <sup>32</sup>*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

(Ephesians 5:3-5 KJV) *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;* <sup>4</sup>*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.* <sup>5</sup>*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

This morning, because of the dream I had, I am going to study out these verses. Father, as I do, I pray Your Holy Spirit will guide me into all truth. I pray for revelation knowledge, dear Lord, to see what You would have me to see that I may learn to always speak life and to not speak death, for the power of life and death are in the tongue. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

4:29 – The word “corrupt” means “rotten, i.e. worthless (literally or morally):--bad.” The word “communication” comes from the word “logos” and has a rich variety of definitions. Interestingly enough, this word “logos” is the same as that used in John Chapter One. This very word “logos” is used to describe Jesus in the beginning. So, it's not just communication, but more fully, it's word. God created the heavens and the earth with His word. Jesus is the logos word of God – the spoken word of God. Here is the full definition - “logos...something said (including the thought); by implication a topic (subject of discourse), also reasoning (the mental faculty) or motive; by extension, a computation; specifically (with the article in John) the Divine Expression (i.e. Christ):--account, cause, communication, X concerning, doctrine, fame, X have to do, intent, matter, mouth, preaching, question, reason, + reckon, remove, say (-ing), shew, X speaker, speech, talk, thing, + none of these things move me, tidings, treatise, utterance, word, work.” Thus, we see why communication was used – to convey the overall purpose of what corrupt thing shouldn't proceed out of our mouths. But, we need to understand that the communication consists of words – the same thing used to describe Jesus.

Now, the word “good” here means “benefit”. And, interestingly enough, the word “edify” comes from a combination of words that mean “architecture, i.e. (concretely) a structure; figuratively confirmation:--building, edify (-ication, -ing).” So, every time we speak words into someone, we are building something. We are either building a strong foundation in that person, or we are building a weak foundation in that person, and we know a house built on a weak foundation cannot stand. This is even proven in the scriptures by Jesus.

(Matthew 7:24-27 KJV) <sup>24</sup>*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a*

*rock: <sup>25</sup>And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. <sup>26</sup>And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: <sup>27</sup>And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

So, while it may please me there are times I can come up with something caustic and witty to say, it is not of God. The very word “caustic” means to destroy. So, I bind that spirit in my life, right now. In the name of Jesus.

Moving further, the word “minister” basically means “to give”. But, what are we giving? Grace unto the hearers. What does that mean? Grace translates to “graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstractly or concretely; literally, figuratively or spiritually; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude):--acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).” So, what we say should gratify the person hearing it. If it does not gratify the person hearing it, we should not say it. Because then, all we are doing is building a weak foundation in that person. Even in correcting our children, we, especially me, need to learn how to do it in a positive way, so they can receive the correction without despising it. Father, I do pray my children, Jose Jr., India, and Kyla will despise not correction. But, that they know we correct them, according to Your word, because we love them. Father, help me to let go of the things that annoy me that do not line up with Your word, so when I do correct them, I am correcting them from the love of God and not from tradition or my own fleshly desires. This I pray in Jesus name.

4:30 – Here we are told to “*grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*” “Grieve” means “to distress”, “be in heaviness”, or “make sorry”. “Holy” means “sacred” or “blameless”. Now, this is interesting, because of where this scripture is. We often hear this scripture, but within the context of the scriptures it’s sandwiched between, it is saying we grieve the Holy Spirit – or cause it to be blamed for our bad behavior. This makes total sense in light of Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:16” – “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*”

We are told “*the holy Spirit of God*” has “*sealed*” us “*unto the day of redemption.*” “Whereby” denotes a fixed position. “Sealed” means “to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation.” So, according to this, if we are Spirit-filled, there should be a “stamp”, a “private mark” on us that says so. And, this stamp is for our security or preservation “unto the day of redemption.” Now, the word “day” here is complex in its definition, but interestingly enough, a part of it is “tame” (as in gentle), but it literally means “the time space between dawn and dark.” Interestingly enough, God divided the dark from the dawn in the beginning of time. So, is this same division a separation between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness? If we do not control our communications, are we not allowing the one to infiltrate the other? Are we not legally opening doors for the enemy to come into our lives. Are we not told “*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*” (Matthew 12:34 KJV). So, when we speak things that are not gratifying to the hearer, yes, we grieve the Holy Spirit, because He does live in us, and how can

He live where evil resides? We move away from Him and the comfort of His presence by our very words and deeds.

Now, what about “redemption”? What is the “day of redemption?” Well, “redemption” itself means “(the act) ransom in full, i.e. (figuratively) riddance, or (specifically) Christian salvation:--deliverance.” And, we know Jesus said on the cross “*It is finished*” (John 19:30 KJV), but it would take a combination of scriptures to prove He paid our debt in full by his death, burial, and resurrection. That will have to be another study on another day. For now, if that point is settled, we know our “ransom in full” has already been paid. So, what is the day of redemption unto which we are sealed? That also will have to be a separate study. But, it should be enough to say we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and we can grieve this very same Holy Spirit, and the scripture is clearly telling us ways we can grieve Him.

4:31 – Here we are told to let some things be put away from us “*with all malice.*” Let’s take them one at a time and look up the original meaning.

“Bitterness”: “acridity (especially poison)”

“Wrath”: “passion (as if breathing hard):--fierceness, indignation”

“Anger”: “desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy) violent passion (ire, or [justifiable] abhorrence); by implication punishment”

“Clamour”: “an outcry (in notification, tumult or grief)”

“Evil Speaking”: “vilification (especially against God)”

“Malice”: “badness, i.e. (subjective) depravity, or (active) malignity, or (passive) trouble”

So, here we have a list of things we are to put away from us, and the verse pretty much sums itself up when it says “*with all malice*”, since it’s saying all “badness, depravity, or malignity”, with “malignity” being an adverb whose root word means “evil in nature, influence, or effect”. Basically, it appears, we are being told here WE need to put these things away from us, and WE need to guard our mouths, because if WE don’t, WE grieve the Holy Spirit. Now, how do we put these things away from us? Let’s examine the very next verse.

4:32 – We are told here to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, “*even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven [us].*” The scriptures teach us in Romans 5:8 that God showed His love towards us “*in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” How often are we willing to die for someone whom we feel is in sin against us? Not very. We often try to change that person’s behavior in order to be loving towards them. But, what if Christ had done that with us? O Lord, what would the state of the world be? Now, that’s not saying God does not correct our unacceptable behavior. He teaches us that very principle in the scriptures.

(Hebrews 12:6 KJV) *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

So, let us not think He loves our behavior. Let us know He loves us enough to correct our behavior, because He knows the things that are good for us AND the things that can bring us harm. We have to trust Him enough to teach us those things, and the way to start is by us doing as He has commanded us here. If we guard our mouth and modify our behavior, we have opened the door of our hearts to him [*“Submit yourselves to God”*] and closed the door on Satan [*“Resist the devil and he will flee”*] (James 4:7).

5:1 – So, the answer to corrupt communication is to speak things gratifying to the hearer. And, the way to put all those things away from us that grieve the Holy Spirit is to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. By doing this, we are fulfilling this verse, which is to *“Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.”*

5:2 – Interestingly enough, one of the definitions for the word “walk” here is “to live, deport oneself”. So, we are being told here “to live, deport oneself” in love. What is this “love”? The original word here is that now famous (or at least to me) word “agape”. And, its definition is “affection or benevolence”. According to Merriam-Webster, “benevolence means “disposition to do good”. So, basically, we are being told to live our lives in the mindset to do good. Why? *“Christ also hath loves us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”* Christ wasn’t concerned about Himself on the cross. He was obedient even unto death (Philippians 2:8).

Now, let us examine some of these words to get the full impact of what Christ did.

“Given”: “to surrender, i.e. yield up”

“Offering”: “presentation; concrete an oblation (bloodless) or sacrifice”

“Sacrifice”: “sacrifice (the act or the victim)”

“Sweet-smelling Saviour”: “good-scentedness, i.e. fragrance”

Literally, what we have is Jesus willingly giving Himself to God, not only as a bloodless offering, but also as a sacrifice (in which He shed His blood for the remission of our sins [Matthew 26:28]), so that it was pleasing unto God. We know God was pleased because it was a good scent or fragrance that went up to Him.

5:3 – Immediately, we have the contrast between that which is good and that which is not. We are told to not have *“fornication”*, *“uncleanness”*, or *“covetousness”*, be ONCE named among the saints. What are these things, and why should they not be named among the saints? The answer to the why is in verse 5. The answer to what they are is here....

“Fornication”: “harlotry (including adultery and incest).”

“All Uncleaness”: “all, any, every, the whole; impurity (the quality), physically or morally.”

“Covetousness”: “avarice, i.e. (by implication) fraudulency, extortion; practices, greediness.”

Now, let's get a better understanding of the word “harlotry” from Merriam-Webster Online dictionary, as not to miss the full meaning of “fornication” - “sexual profligacy : prostitution; an unprincipled or immoral woman.” If we look deeper at “profligacy”, we find “wildly extravagant” as the simpler definition. In other words, no restraints. And, if we look at “prostitution”, we find “the act or practice of indulging in promiscuous sexual relations especially for money”. And, to understand this, we need to understand “promiscuous” means “not restricted to one sexual partner”. Okay, let's explore for a moment. If you have sex before you are married, does not the likelihood increase you will have more than one sexual partner? Yes. If you have sex with someone other than your marriage partner, are you committing adultery? Yes. Now, why would God tell us not to do the very thing He gave us a natural desire to do when He told man to multiply and replenish the earth? Well, now, let's look around. First, there was Herpes, which was like a set of good Samsonite luggage – with you for life. Now, there's AIDS, and it can very well kill you. Yes, medical advancements have improved the life of SOME AIDS patients, but not all. It is still a deadly disease. And, what about this “all uncleaness” issue? The scripture didn't say “some”, or “most”, but it said “all”. Okay, so what's an impurity? Basically, it's something not pure, or contains something unclean. And, was God not very clear in His word about what He felt was “clean” and “unclean”, even in the New Testament? As with some other things, that's another study for another day, because some things were changed in the New Testament with regards to this, but we are also told “*Let not then your good be evil spoken of*” (Romans 14:16 KJV). So, from this, I would gather we have to be concerned about how others perceive what we do. And, it's not because we are trying to please man, but because we are trying to not dishonor God. And, last, but not least, we get to “covetousness”, and, that's pretty clear. Don't be greedy or do anything that takes something away from someone else. This includes stealing from work, or doing things that rob others of their rightful income.

5:5 – And, here we have the sum of all of this. I'm not going to break each of these words down again, because we have already defined them. But, I will note the scripture calls the covetous man an idolater. In other words, this person worships images. And, God is very clear on this when He tells us, Don't Do It! Bottom line, is here we are told if we do these things we don't have “*any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*” Now, it's interesting to note the scriptures define two kingdoms – that of Christ and of God. The word “Christ” here means “anointed”, and the word “God” here means “diety”. So, we have the kingdom (rule) of an anointed One and of a Diety.

# 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

(1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV) *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

I have often heard God will not put more on me than I can bear. But, is that the actual scripture? I did a word search through the bible for the word “bear” and this is the only scripture I found that lines up with that thought. So, let us examine this scripture to learn what it means.

The word “temptation” means “a putting to proof (by experiment [of good], experience [of evil], solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication adversity.” The word “God” is “theos” which represents the deity of God. To better understand this, I looked up deity in Merriam-Webster Online. Basically, it’s “the rank or essential nature of a god” or “one exalted or revered as supremely good or powerful” – in essence a “Supreme Being”. The word “faithful” means “trustworthy”. The word “suffer” means “permit”. The word “tempt” means “to test”. The “way to escape” means “to go out; an exit”. The word “bear” means “to bear from underneath, i.e. (figuratively) to undergo hardship”.

Now, looking at all of this, it seems the temptations that come our way are meant to prove something, as if in an experiment. Now, I know the bible tell us to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12). I also know James 1:3 tells us, “*Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*” And, James 1:13-14 tells us, “<sup>13</sup>*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: <sup>14</sup>But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*” So, it seems to me God is not the one that is tempting us. I cannot find any scriptural reference that these “temptations” come from God. But, I can find scriptural references that we tempt God and that the devil, or Satan, tempts us. (Exodus 17:7, Psalm 78:18, Hebrews 3:9, Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:13, Luke 4:2 to name just a few). He even tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, but Jesus responded with the word of God.

Why did He respond with the word of God? I knew at some point Jesus had said the prince of this world had nothing in Him (John 14:30), so I looked up the actual scripture and found this:

(John 14:30-31) <sup>30</sup>*Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. <sup>31</sup>But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, Let us go hence.*

Thus, going back to our original scripture, it would seem we can only be tempted when there is something in us that needs to be tested to prove our love of the Father. And, it seems to me obedience is what proves that love. Jesus tells us, “*If ye love me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15 KJV). And, then, He repeats Himself in verse 23.

James teaches in Chapter Two that faith without works is dead. And, Proverbs 4:23 teaches us to *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”* So, if the issues of life come from our heart, and we say God knows our heart, how do we best prove what is in our heart? Could it possibly be by the works we do when we are “tempted” and “drawn away of our own lusts”? If Christ abides in us by the Holy Spirit of God, then how is it Satan has so much control over us? How is it when we are tempted, we forget to look for the *“way to escape”*? I have to ask myself, do we make the blood of Christ an empty sacrifice every time we are drawn away into sin? Did He not come to deliver us? Were not the Israelites totally delivered from Egypt? They didn’t have one foot in Egypt and one foot in the Promised Land, though they did spend 40 years wandering around in the wilderness. So, why do we want to have one foot in the Kingdom of God and one foot in the kingdom of darkness, or worse yet die off in the wilderness from our own disobedience? Hebrews 10:13-26 comes immediately to mind. Is it we don’t have the spiritual eyes to see the way to escape or the spiritual ears to listen as the Holy Spirit is telling us which way to go to escape the temptation upon us? Is it we haven’t received the word of truth, or is it we ignore the word of truth? *If we ignore the word of truth, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins”* (Hebrews 10:26).

According to 1 Corinthians 10:13, God will not allow us to be tempted with anything not common to man, in other words *“after the manner of men.”* We know from Ecclesiastes 1:9 *“there is no new thing under the sun,”* so whatever we are going through it is not new to man. Someone, somewhere has gone through or is going through the same thing as we are. Maybe that’s why God tells us, *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Hebrews 3:13 KJV), and *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:1-2 KJV). And, let us not forget, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25 KJV).

See, if the enemy can keep us divided, he can conquer us (Luke 11:17). But, if we would help each other to find the *“way to escape”*, maybe the body of Christ could actually have victory and the will of God would be *“done in earth as it in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). Instead, it seems we spend more time focusing on what we want God to give us than what we want God to take out of us. Seems like, if we let Him show us the *“way to escape”*, we would be a lot happier, because then we would not continue to be *“drawn away of our lusts.”* And, we would actually be able to *“Let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16 KJV). Praise be to God the Father, Who is the creator of all heaven and earth.

## **CHAPTER FOUR – REVELATION AND REFLECTION**

**GENESIS 49:10**

(Genesis 49:10 KJV) *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

This is a very interesting verse. “Sceptre” translates “to branch off”. “Judah” translates to “celebrated”. “Lawgiver” translates to “engrave” and by implication, “to enact law”. “Shiloh” translates to “tranquil” and “an epithet of the Messiah”. “Feet” translates “a foot (as used in walking); by implication, a step; by euphemism, the pudenda:-- X be able to endure”. Since I didn’t know what “pudenda” is, I looked it up in the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary. Now, this is very interesting: “the external genital organs of a human being and especially of a woman -- usually used in plural.” And, finally, “gathering” translates “obedience”.

*The sceptre (to branch off) shall not depart from Judah (celebrated), nor a lawgiver (engrave or enact the law) from between his feet (a step, able to endure, a woman’s external genital organs), until Shiloh (tranquil, the Messiah) come; and unto him shall the gathering (obedience) of the people be.*

*Amplified Bible: The scepter or leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes to Whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.*

But, I have this sense there is more in here than that, because of Judah. The Messiah comes from the tribe of Judah, and Judah means celebrated. Oh. Wait. In other words, salvation will not branch off from Israel to the Gentiles, nor a “new law” given that enables steps to be taken that we [Gentiles] may endure and have peace until the Messiah comes. And, this peace comes from His people being obedient to Him. The Messiah is the Celebrated One from the tribe of Judah in Whom salvation rests.

Now, I’m not sure what the woman’s external genital organs has to do with this, though I have this sense it relates to women in the ministry. There are women mentioned in the Old Testament, and in the New. But, exactly what this is saying, is unclear to me. And, it is one of those hotly debated issues best left alone for now.

Giving all praise, honor, and glory to the Father in Heaven and His Son, the Lord Jesus, the Christ.

**GENESIS 49:11-12**

(Genesis 49:11-12 KJV) <sup>11</sup>*Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:* <sup>12</sup>*His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.*

Let's break down the words to their original meaning:

“Binding”: “to yoke or hitch; by analogy to fasten in any sense, to join battle”

“Foal”: “in the sense of raising (i.e. bearing a burden)”

“Vine”: “to bend; a vine (as twining)”

“Ass”: “comes from another word as in the sense of patience; a female ass (from its docility)”

“Colt”: “a son (as a builder of the family name)”

“Choice Vine”: “comes from another word as in the sense of redness; a vine stock (probably one yielding purple grapes, the richest variety)--choice (-st, noble) wine”

“Washed”: “to trample; hence to wash (probably by stamping with the feet), whether literally (including the fulling process) or figuratively”

“Garments”: “by implication (euphemism) a wife”

“Wine”: “from an unused root meaning to effervesce; wine (as fermented); by implication, intoxication”

“Clothes”: “covering”

“Blood”: “blood (as that which when shed causes death) of man or an animal; by analogy, the juice of the grape”

“Grapes”: “from an unused root probably meaning to bear fruit”

“Eyes”: “an eye (literally or figuratively); by analogy, a fountain (as the eye of the landscape); also can mean “affliction” or “outward appearance”

“Red”: “to be dark; darkly flashing (only of the eyes); in a good sense, brilliant (as stimulated by wine)”

“Teeth”: “(as sharp)”

“Milk”: “(as the richness of kine); “kine” is an old plural word for “cow”

Now, let’s put the definitions in the midst of the text and see how it reads:

*Binding (to yoke) his foal (raising; bearing a burden) unto the vine (to bend), and his ass's (sense of patience; a female ass) colt (son) unto the choice vine (redness); he washed (trample with the feet) his garments (a wife) in wine (to effervesce), and his clothes (covering) in the blood (that which when shed causes death) of grapes (bear fruit): His eyes (a fountain) shall be red (darkly flashing; affliction) with wine (to effervesce), and his teeth (sharp) white with milk (the richness of cows).*

I find it interesting the text uses both garments and clothes in relationship to washing. “*He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood.*” Looking at just that small piece of the text, the church represents the wife (bride) of Christ [Revelation 19:7-9]. Using only the definitions, it reads as: *He trampled with his feet his wife [the church] to effervesce, and his covering in the blood that when shed causes death [to] bear fruit.* In other words, the church is “trampled” to effervesce or be intoxicated in Him, and His covering was “trampled” at the cross where He shed His blood that we may bear fruit. Um. That makes perfect sense in light of Matthew 27:45-46 where there was darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour as Jesus hung on the cross. Around the ninth hour, Jesus cried, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” So, at this point, He was without the covering from the Father He had always known that He may shed His blood for our sins. Wow! And, then, Ephesians 5:18-21 teaches us,

<sup>18</sup>*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*  
<sup>19</sup>*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;* <sup>20</sup>*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;* <sup>21</sup>*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

Now, let’s put it all together. We are yoked to burdens that raise us up and cause us to bend [be reshaped] that we may develop patience and give birth to the presence of the Son in our lives, Who is the Choicest Vine. For He trampled with his feet his wife [the church] to effervesce [show liveliness or exhilaration], and his covering [is] the blood that when shed causes [our fleshly] death [to] bear [spiritual] fruit. His fountain in us shall be affliction that we may effervesce, and His word [which is sharper than any two-edged sword] will cause us to be white [act righteously] to the point that it becomes as rich in us and as much a part of us as milk is in the milk cow.

And, as my husband has taught me, the best place to confirm revelation is the word of God, so here are a few scriptures that immediately come to mind.

(Psalm 34:19 KJV) *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

*(Romans 8:2 KJV) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*(Matthew 5:16 KJV) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

*(1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV) There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

*(Hebrews 4:12 KJV) For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

*(Romans 12:2 KJV) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

*(2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Again, I give all praise, honor, and glory to the Father and to His Son, the Lord Jesus, the Christ.

11 September 2002

As I sit here this day, there is such a spirit of heaviness about me, so much so I had a hard time waking up. And, when I did, all I wanted to do was cry. So, my first instinct was to go back to bed and “sleep it off”. But, as I lay there, part of the song “Yes Lord” began to ring in my spirit. The basic words to the chorus are thus:

Yes, Lord  
Yes, Lord  
From the bottom of my heart  
To the depths of my soul  
Yes Lord  
Completely Yes  
My soul says Yes

And, then I heard the question, “Why does the song say ‘My soul says Yes’?” And, what I already knew, rang out within me – because within your soul is where you make your choices. It is so ironic a year later, God is still teaching me how important choices are. See, one year ago, I was in the military. And, I was planning to get out when my enlistment ended on 25 December 2001. I would have started my final (terminal) leave on 9 November 2001 and headed home to begin a whole new life. But, as a result of the 9/11 attacks, many branches of the military implemented something called Stop Loss. The result is (except for some exceptions), you are not allowed to leave the military until Stop Loss has been lifted, either completely or for your particular specialty, whatever the case may be. So, when my day to begin my terminal leave came around, I found my choice to leave the military had been taken from me, and now, I was being held against my will. With each new round of information, things appeared more and more hopeless, especially as some specialties were released, but mine wasn’t. I felt like such a hostage, and over those next three months, God began to deal with me on choices and free will.

Yes, I freely entered the military, and I freely stayed until 9 November 2001. But, at that point, it was not my option anymore. And, I began to understand how important our free will is and how important choices are when it comes to us serving God. Now, don’t get me wrong, it was a hard lesson, but it wasn’t over. Because even though I understood this in my mind, there were, and still are times, when my soul just does not want to say yes.

So, over the past 10 months, God has continually been teaching me about choices. Just recently, my favorite television preacher delivered four good messages here in Atlanta on just that subject - choices. Before she came, without even knowing what she was teaching on, I had committed in my heart I was going to attend all four sessions. And, continuously, along the way, things rose up that made it look like I wasn’t going to make it. But, God! He is Good, and He made it possible for me to be there each time to hear just what I needed to hear.

Over that weekend, she confirmed the things God had been teaching me, and I knew it was time for me to make new choices. The initial after effects weren’t a pretty sight, because my soul just did not want to say yes to what the Spirit of God was saying. I knew I needed to let go of some things, but I didn’t know how. Eventually, it occurred to me I wasn’t letting go of them because,

deep down, I didn't want to. I didn't want to let go of my anger, or my hurt. I didn't want to let go of my feelings. I didn't want to forgive. It was a choice I had to make. And, now, giving all praise and honor to God, I am learning how to look beyond me and truly understand a phrase I have often heard from Joyce Meyer... "hurting people, hurt people." It is such a simple phrase, but it is helping me to look past my hurts and see what hurts are causing others to act or react the way they do. It has been most liberating.

So, as I lay there in my bed and reflected back to last September 11th, the scripture that was recalled to my mind was about the garment of praise being for the spirit of heaviness. So, I looked it up, and it reads: *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified"* (Isaiah 61:3 KJV). I found I had a choice to make. So, I did.

First, I gave God praise for who He is. I gave Him praise for being Jehovah and all the names of Jehovah that reveal His character to us. I praised Him for being our peace. I praised Him for being our strength. I praised Him for being our healer. I thanked Him for all those who are now at home in glory with Him as a result of 9/11. And, I thanked Him for all those who received a second chance that day and have repented, so now their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I thanked Him for giving this nation the opportunity to repent. And, I asked Him to move on the hearts of Christians everywhere to reach those who are still lost. There is nothing we can do about those who were lost that day – physically or spiritually. But, there is something we can do about the living. I wonder if that's why Jesus said in Matthew 8:22, *"Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead"* when one of His disciples asked to go and bury his father.

To many, this will seem cruel. But, as I look at this, only the dead can bury the dead. I remember when my brother died in an accident at work, I didn't mourn for him. I was happy his struggles were finally over. He had had some tough times in his young life, and I knew he would never hurt again. I also knew there was nothing else that could be done to save his soul, so I rested in the hope of his salvation. I knew he believed in Jesus, so my hope was he had run a good race and didn't come up short in the end (Philippians 2:16).

I did, however, mourn for me. I wept at my loss and the hole now in my life. I reflected on all the mistakes I had made and wished I could go back and make sure he knew I really did love him. But, I can't. None of us can. So, I found my peace in believing he had gone home to the Father, and I began to reevaluate my life. I made some choices to clean up my life and to seek God all the more earnestly; as not to waste any more of the precious time I have been given on this earth. The journey gets hard sometimes, and periodically, I lose sight of my focus and get caught up in me. But, thank God He always brings me back to the right path.

In the wake of 9/11, what should we do? We should rejoice for those who are with the Father and hope none were lost forever. We can try to reach those who are still lost, so they won't be lost forever. The parable of the lost sheep immediately comes to mind (Luke 15:4-7). It wasn't enough that 99 of the sheep were accounted for. There was still one that was lost, and the shepherd was not content until it was found. In the same manner, Jesus, our Shepherd, is not

content when there is still one lost soul out there, and we are to be His ambassadors to reach that soul (2 Corinthians 5:20).

How many are yet lost in America? How many in the church are still lost? Those who draw near to Him with their mouth and honor Him with their lips; but their heart is far from Him (Matthew 15:8). Is that why Jesus told His disciples not to go to the Gentiles (or the unsaved), but to go to the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-8). Here, Israel represents the church, and He is telling them to “*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give*” (v8 KJV). He wasn’t telling them to deal with the unsaved first; He was telling them to first clean up the church. The Gentiles came later. How can the sick heal the sick? Will not they both be infected? What testimony does the church have the world should respond to? If we’re still living defeated lives, what do we have to offer anyone else? Is that not what America needs to learn from 9/11. Look at it. September 11th: 9/11. A call for help: 911. Is this not a call for help in the nation of America? Have we not forgotten our God? We have kicked Him out of so many places, yet we now sing, “God bless America”. When is America going to bless God!? When will the nations of the world be able to look at us and know we believe what our money says ...“In God We Trust”!?

We shouldn’t go around preaching hate or standing in judgment of non-Christians. In due season, the word will judge them (John 12:48). Instead, we should be the very essence of love, so non-Christians will be drawn to the Spirit that lives within us. We can love the person, but hate the sin. We can pray for the person, without condoning the sin. But, if we’re one of those angry, judgmental Christians, what does that say about Him in whose name we are sent? I remember recently watching a “Touched by an Angel” re-run. And, a female character told the Angel of Death character he looked like love, not one of those angry types. And, even though it was just a television episode, I found the words to be very profound. They actually made me examine myself. Do I look like love to others? Or, do I look like anger? When we look like love to others, we are fulfilling the greatest commandments: love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:29-31), for God is love (1 John 4:8,16).

We are taught to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). But, is that what we do? Is that even in our human nature? I know it isn’t natural within me. I want to fight my own battles. I want to get revenge. But, if I would just let my soul say yes to the Spirit of God, would He not avenge me (Romans 12:18-20)? Because He promises His word will not come back void, I believe He would (Isaiah 55:11).

So, today, the second choice I made was to get up out of my bed and search His word for scriptures on “yet praise”. The two psalms I found are attached. Both speak so clearly to me of what this nation is going through right now. And, what this nation is going through, so clearly speaks to me of the life of every person within it – not just as a result of the 9/11 attacks, but also in every situation we go through where our soul has to make a choice. Will we yet praise God, or will we keep on the spirit of heaviness? Today, as my soul is saying yes to God, I can feel this great sadness lifting from within me. Would that others would join me and say yes to God and replace our mourning with joy and our spirit of heaviness with the garment of praise.

Let us yet praise the Lord Jesus, the Christ, for what the enemy meant for harm, our Father in heaven will turn to good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28). His promises are true. So, while “*Many are the afflictions of the righteous: ... the LORD delivereth him out of them all*” (Psalms 34:19 KJV).

And, by the way, when everyone else thought it was impossible, my God delivered me from the military well before Stop Loss ended. And, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that had I not gone through those three months of being held hostage, I would not appreciate the life I now have. My soul says yes!

## PSALM 71 (Amplified)

<sup>1</sup>In You, O Lord, do I put my trust and confidently take refuge; let me never be put to shame or confusion! <sup>2</sup>Deliver me in Your righteousness and cause me to escape; bow down Your ear to me and save me! <sup>3</sup>Be to me a rock of refuge in which to dwell, and a sheltering stronghold to which I may continually resort, which You have appointed to save me, for You are my Rock and my Fortress. <sup>4</sup>Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the grasp of the unrighteous and ruthless man. <sup>5</sup>For You are my hope; O Lord God, You are my trust from my youth and the source of my confidence. <sup>6</sup>Upon You have I leaned and relied from birth; You are He Who took me from my mother's womb and You have been my benefactor from that day. My praise is continually of You. <sup>7</sup>I am as a wonder and surprise to many, but You are my strong refuge. <sup>8</sup>My mouth shall be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day. <sup>9</sup>Cast me not off nor send me away in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent and my powers fail. <sup>10</sup>For my enemies talk against me; those who watch for my life consult together, <sup>11</sup>saying, God has forsaken him; pursue and persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him. <sup>12</sup>O God, be not far from me! O my God, make haste to help me! <sup>13</sup>Let them be put to shame and consumed who are adversaries to my life; let them be covered with reproach, scorn, and dishonor who seek and require my hurt. <sup>14</sup>But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more. <sup>15</sup>My mouth shall tell of Your righteous acts and of Your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is more than I know. <sup>16</sup>I will come in the strength and with the mighty acts of the Lord God; I will mention and praise Your righteousness, even Yours alone. <sup>17</sup>O God, You have taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works. <sup>18</sup>Yes, even when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, [but keep me alive] until I have declared Your mighty strength to [this] generation, and Your might and power to all that are to come. <sup>19</sup>Your righteousness also, O God, is very high [reaching to the heavens], You Who have done great things; O God, who is like You, or who is Your equal? <sup>20</sup>You Who have shown us [all] troubles great and sore will quicken us again and will bring us up again from the depths of the earth. <sup>21</sup>Increase my greatness (my honor) and turn and comfort me. <sup>22</sup>I will also praise You with the harp, even Your truth and faithfulness, O my God; unto You will I sing praises with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. <sup>23</sup>My lips shall shout for joy when I sing praises to You, and my inner being, which You have redeemed. <sup>24</sup>My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; for they are put to shame, for they are confounded, who seek and demand my hurt.

## PSALM 42 (New International Version)

<sup>1</sup> *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" <sup>4</sup> These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. <sup>5</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and <sup>6</sup> my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. <sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. <sup>8</sup> By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me— a prayer to the God of my life. <sup>9</sup> I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" <sup>10</sup> My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" <sup>11</sup> Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*

**ISAIAH 61:3**

(Isaiah 61:3 KJV) *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*

This scripture is something placed on my heart on September 11th, when there was such a spirit of heaviness within me, so I wanted to study it out and see how it breaks down. In examining the original meanings (attached), I found most of the translations pretty straightforward. Some words had broader meanings, but there was nothing in most of them that caused me to go “hmm”. However, I did note some interesting points. First, I find the contrast between “beauty” and “ashes” to be intriguing within themselves. In defining the word “beauty,” it referred to “an embellishment, i.e. fancy head-dress.” And, the word “ashes” meant “to bestrew; ashes.” So, I had to look up “bestrew.” It’s not one of my vocabulary words, but it means to “lie scattered over.” In other words, what we seem to have here is to “lie scattered over ashes.” We go from a fancy head-dress to scattered ashes. This made me want to look up the words “beauty” and “ashes” in the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary. And, here’s what I found.

“Beauty” – “the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit”

“Ashes” – It can be a noun or a verb. There were two meanings as a noun, each with multiple entries. Here is the first definition of each noun:

“1 : any of a genus [class, kind, or group marked by common characteristics or by one common characteristic] of trees of the olive family with pinnate leaves [resembling a feather], thin furrowed bark, and gray branchlets”

“1 : something that symbolizes grief, repentance, or humiliation”

Now, I found this to be most interesting, because the olive tree is where the anointing oil comes from, and that definition is contrasted with grief, repentance, and humiliation. Wow! That says a lot just about the word ashes. And, if you take that and contrast it against beauty, it’s almost like it’s saying, “replace your grief, repentance, and humiliation with an adornment that is going to please the senses and exalt the mind and spirit; and in so doing, even from the ashes of your grief, there is an anointing that is waiting for you”. And, after saying that, it’s like we’re told some of the ways we can do that. We can replace mourning with joy. We can replace those moments when we feel feeble and obscure, utterly helpless in our own strength, with praise.

What is the result of this? Those who were mourning now have strength to do the right thing. Why do I say that? Because the original word for “tree” means “strength”. Thus, “*that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified*”

really means our strength comes from when we “plant” the Lord within us, and in so planting, we cause Him to “gleam” and become our “embellishment.” His glory shines through us.

## DEFINITIONS

“Appoint”: “to put”; used a lot of different ways but seeming to have a causal affect, i.e. “appoint, bring, care, cast in, change, charge, commit” to name just a few

“Mourn”: “lamenting [to mourn aloud (Merriam-Webster’s Online dictionary)]”

“Give”: “used with great latitude of application (put, make, etc.)”

“Beauty”: “an embellishment, i.e. fancy head-dress”

“Ashes”: “to bestrew; ashes [to lie scattered over (Merriam-Webster’s Online dictionary)]”

“Oil”: “grease, especially liquid (as from the olive, often perfumed); figuratively richness”

“Joy”: “cheerfulness; specifically welcome”

“Mourning”: “lamentation”

“Garment”: “a vestment”

“Praise”: “laudation; specifically (concrete) a hymn” (laudation meaning ‘the act of praising’)

“Spirit”: “wind; by resemblance breath, i.e. a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figuratively life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension, a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (including its expression and functions)”

“Heaviness”: “feeble, obscure:--somewhat dark, darkish, wax dim, heaviness, smoking.”

“Trees”: “strength; hence anything strong; specifically a chief (politically); also a ram (from his strength); a pilaster (as a strong support); an oak or other strong tree”

“Righteousness”: “the right (natural, moral or legal); also (abstractly) equity or (figuratively) prosperity”

“Planting”: “something planted, i.e. the place (a garden or vineyard), or the thing (a plant, figuratively of men)”

“Lord”: “(the) self-Existent or Eternal”

“Glorified”: “to gleam, i.e. (causative) embellish; figurative to boast; also to explain (i.e. make clear) oneself”

## **CHAPTER FIVE – THE BATTLE IS IN THE MIND**

### PHILLIPIANS 4:6-8

(Philippians 4:6-8 KJV) *<sup>6</sup>Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>**Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*** (Boldness added for emphasis)

Here lately, verse 8 has been the verse the Lord has continually placed on my heart. A part of this is because I am learning to overcome negativity, and I believe negativity begins in the mind and is manifested in the heart and through the mouth. Why do I say this? Let's look at some scriptures:

(Romans 12:2 KJV) *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

(Proverbs 4:23 KJV) *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

(Proverbs 18:21 KJV) *Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*

These are just three of many scriptures that talk to us about our mind, heart, and tongue. But, they lay the foundation for verse 8 above (I bolded it for emphasis). Let's start with the heart. See, what's in the heart is what's in the man. Jesus even tells us the things that come from the mouth "*proceed out of the heart; and they defile the man*" (Matthew 15:18 KJV). The issues of life (positive or negative) are in the heart and the tongue confesses (either life or death) accordingly. But, how does our heart get full of life (positive things) or death (negative things)? I believe it is primarily through our senses and our experiences.

Although I believe genetics (and more importantly spiritual influences) play a role in who we become, I believe our everyday environment has the capability to shape us more than any other influence in our lives. Yes, because man fell in the Garden of Eden, we are all born into sin. But, I truly believe what we become is, ultimately, our choice. We can spend our lives blaming everyone else around us for being as we are, but what we need to understand the most is we are as we are because, somewhere along the way, we chose to be. And, I know that's a harsh statement to make, but nevertheless, I believe it to be truth – truth, that when received, can make us free from the things that hold us into bondage.

Why do I say this? First of all, when we are born into this world, we are like blank pieces of paper. And, just like any story ever written, the contents determine the storyline: mystery,

drama, horror, romance, suspense thriller, etc. That's how our lives unfold before us. When we live in harsh situations, are abandoned by parents, suffer divorce and numerous other calamities that befall man, our lives take on the drama associated with those events. There is always emotional backlash from these types of things. But, at some point in life, each of us is faced with a choice: we can either let our past determine our future, or we can look to the Lord our God for healing and transformation into what He created us to be.

In Jeremiah 1:5, God tells the prophet *"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations"* (KJV). In other words, before Jeremiah ever entered this world, God had a plan for His life. I don't believe it's just with Jeremiah, but with all of us, that God has a plan for our lives. But, what's the point? It's that I believe we determine how that plan unfolds. But, how do we determine that? By the things that go into our mind and shape our hearts (and ultimately our very souls).

As noted earlier, we are told to not conform to this world, but to be transformed by renewing our minds. And, in Hosea 4:6 we are told, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (KJV). When we first come into this world, our minds are a depository for everything that enters into the five gates God gave us to interact with this world: our sense of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Whenever one of these senses is activated, it sends a message to our brain that is eventually stored in our souls. And, we learn to act or react based on these messages.

For instance, Little Johnny is told the stove is hot. Well, now, Little Johnny doesn't believe Mommy and Daddy that the stove is hot, so Little Johnny toddles up there and touches the hot stove. Guess what...Little Johnny learns a lesson...the stove is indeed HOT! This may be simplistic, but with everything, this is how simple life truly is. We learn from our experiences, and our experiences shape our heart. Our hurts, our joys, our triumphs, and our failures are all stored in our hearts, thus shaping how we act and the things we speak. And, if we never come to Jesus, the only knowledge we ever have is the knowledge of the world.

Now, let's look at the "tongue" or the things we speak. In James, we learn blessings and cursings should not proceed from the same mouth (3:10). As a matter of fact, James Chapter Three teaches us well on the tongue. We learn 1) the tongue is an "unruly evil" (v8) and 2) some things just don't mix (v10-12). One of the examples we are given is a fig tree bearing olive berries (v12). It can't happen. And, just like that can't happen, we should not bless God and curse man out of the same mouth. The two are not meant to go together.

But, in order to better understand this concept, I have to confess and say I got curious and looked up the word curse in Merriam-Webster's Online dictionary. Did the vast meaning of the word ever shock me. In all honesty, I had to look up the first two words (imprecation and execration). I found "imprecation" means "invoke evil on", and "execration" means things like "denouncing" or "something detested". Then, I looked up "denounce" and found "to pronounce especially publicly to be blameworthy or evil" and "to inform against". That was a real eye opener for me!

So, does that mean that every time I "vent" what someone did to me to someone else I am cursing the person who "hurt" me? I believe so, because I am placing blame on them for what

they did instead of examining myself against God's word and how to handle the situation. If I am totally honest with myself, when I am venting to someone else, most of the time, I am indeed looking for a sympathetic ear that will make me feel better about myself. I am not looking for correction, because I don't see where I did anything wrong. After all, I was the one whose feelings got hurt. I'd also like to make a distinction between the times I am looking for sympathy and the times I am honestly looking for answers as to what happened. Sometimes, we just don't see ourselves as others do, and we must seek Godly counsel to work through a situation.

Does that mean our feelings won't ever get hurt? I don't think so. But, I think it does mean we should be more careful about what we say to someone about others. I wonder. Does this mean we become an accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) every time we pass along a "bad deed" that was done to us? Does not God hear us as we tell our woes to someone else? Would it not be better to do as He commanded us in Matthew 5:44, *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"* (KJV). Hmm. That's not always the easiest thing in the world to do, but I have His promise that *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13 KJV).

So, how does all of this relate to Philipians 4:8? To better understand how my heart is filled with negativity, I examined the original meanings of the words (attached). See, from a natural point of view, we are going to ponder things that happen to us in search of answers. Often times, we become negative, disillusioned, or embittered. But, that's not what we are told here in verse 8. We are told to not be anxious about any man, woman, or thing. That by prayer (worship) and earnest requests with gratitude that is an act of worship, we are to make our requests known to God. In other words, ask with a grateful heart. Then, we are told, *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* We must take note the text says "AND", which means the first part is joined or connected to the second part. How?

Basically, if we go to God and ask for something with our hearts worshipping Him, His peace (prosperity), which is above our intellect, SHALL guard our heart (thoughts and feelings) and mind (perceptions) through a fixed position. And, that fixed position is where we are in Jesus Christ. At the point we confess Jesus as Lord of our lives and accept Him as our Savior, we now have The One who is able to guard our hearts! Hallelujah! No longer do we have to allow the hurts we experience to steal our peace.

This is a mighty revelation to how truly important it is to spend time in prayer with our Father in heaven. When we pray and let Him know the things in our hearts, He exalts His peace above every man, woman, or thing, and above every thought or perception that would come against that peace. But, it can only happen if we stay fixed in Jesus Christ. But, how do we stay fixed in Jesus? The very next verse tells us how to do this: we think about things that are true, honorable, equitable in character, innocent, friendly towards (others), and reputable. If there is excellence to be found or a thing is commendable, we are to take inventory of that thing.

If we think on these things, rest assured, there will be no room in our lives for gossip, backbiting, or other sins of the tongue. And, although these are some hard truths to accept, I believe the more these truths begin to manifest themselves within us, the more our minds will be renewed and the more our hearts will be transformed. Until, eventually, we will do as we have been commanded in Ephesians 4:29, *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (KJV); then, we will learn to *“overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:21 KJV).

Praise God for His Son, Jesus! For through Him, we can *“come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

## DEFINITIONS

“Careful”: “to be anxious about:--(be, have) care (-ful), take thought”

“Nothing”: “not even one (man, woman, thing)”

“Everything”: “a primitive word; all, any, every, the whole”

“Prayer”: “prayer (worship); by implication an oratory (chapel) [oratory: a place of prayer; *especially* : a private or institutional chapel (Merriam-Webster’s Online dictionary)]”

“Supplication”: “a petition [an earnest request (Merriam-Webster’s Online dictionary)]”

“Thanksgiving”: “gratitude; actively grateful language (to God, as an act of worship)”

“Requests”: “a thing asked”

“Peace”: “peace (literally or figuratively); by implication prosperity”

“Passeth”: “to hold oneself above, i.e. (figuratively) to excel”

“Understanding”: “the intellect, i.e. mind (divine or human; in thought, feeling, or will)”

“Keep”: “to be a watcher in advance, i.e. to mount guard as a sentinel (post spies at gates); figuratively to hem in, protect”

“Hearts”: “the heart, i.e. (figuratively) the thoughts or feelings (mind); also (by analogy) the middle”

“Minds”: “a perception, i.e. purpose, or (by implication) the intellect, disposition, itself”

“Through”: “preposition denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state)”

“True”: “true (as not concealing)”

“Honest”: “venerable, i.e. honorable”

“Just”: “equitable (in character or act); by implication innocent, holy (absolute or relative)”

“Pure”: “probably clean, i.e. (figuratively) innocent, modest, perfect”

“Lovely”: “friendly towards, i.e. acceptable”

“Good report”: “well spoken of, i.e. reputable”

“Virtue”: “manliness (valor), i.e. excellence (intrinsic or attributed)”

“Praise”: “laudation; concrete, a commendable thing”

“Think”: “to take an inventory, i.e. estimate (literally or figuratively)”

Father God in heaven, this is such an awesome day, and I just want to thank You for it. Yesterday, I was so tortured in my mind and feeling such condemnation, because I know You have been dealing with me on Philippians 4:8, but I just didn't know how to make it happen in my life. And, it's not I haven't heard people say this before, but for some reason, today this word became rhema word to me and not just logos. Father, I understand now how to renew my mind. And, I thank You for that. By Your revelation and Your Spirit I gave India the example today of three glasses of water...one for my heart, one for my mind, and one for my mouth. The glass that represented my heart had water in it...the issues of life that have been stored in my heart. The other two were empty. And, I took the one that represented my mind and put water in it...the word of God. And, then I took it and poured it into the one that represented my mouth...the things I say. And, then I took that one and poured it into the one that represented my heart. And, the more I poured from my mind, to my mouth, to my heart, eventually, what was in my heart began to overflow. *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23 KJV). After awhile, the water in the glass that represents the heart will be replaced by the water that represents the mind and the mouth. I have been approaching this situation backwards my entire Christian walk. I have been trying to change my mouth and my thoughts with my heart. But, that's not how it works. I change my heart with my mind and with my mouth. The more I study the word of God and commit it to my mind, the more word of knowledge I will have to confess in any given situation. And, the more I confess that word, the more I will hear the word and it will be absorb into my heart. I once heard Dr. Creflo Dollar make a statement similar to "your heart is the spiritual ear you hear God with." And, now I understand what that means. You can absorb the word of God in your mind, and that's how your mind is renewed. But, until that word of God is planted in your heart, there will be no change in your life. You have logical word (logos), without any resulting power (rhema) in your life. That's been me on so many occasions. And, until now, I couldn't figure out why I was having such a hard time making the jump from knowing right to doing right in a lot of situations. I believe that's why the apostle Paul said, *"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I"* (Romans 7:15 KJV). The last few weeks, as God has been ministering to me on negativity, I have found no matter how hard I tried not to be negative, I was. And, I was getting so frustrated, because I felt so condemned within myself. I knew what was right, but I couldn't do what was right. No matter how hard I tried, I kept hearing myself being negative, and it would disgust me, because I knew better. I knew better! I knew what I was doing, saying, and thinking wasn't Godly, yet I couldn't change it. And, every time I would go to church, I would hear a message that would confirm for me what God was telling me in our private time. Yet, I still was doing things I knew were wrong. That's what the apostle Paul meant when he said, *"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me"* (Romans 7:17 KJV). It's not me (my spirit man) doing these things, but it's the sin that dwells in me. And, like he said in verses 24 and 25 *"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."* Oh my God!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Your Word has come alive for me!! Oh, I cannot begin to describe the depths of what I feel right now. The tremendous and overwhelming joy and release from the condemnation I feel. This scripture is not a scripture to justify our sin. It's a scripture to help us understand how to overcome it!!!!!! OOOOOoooooo. I just wish I could describe what I feel. I

thank You, Jesus for making me free. I can't change my heart to change my thoughts. I have to change what I confess from my mouth to change my heart. And, it's ironic, because I'm always saying to speak life and not death. But, I didn't understand; I didn't fully understand I would have to do that even when there was death in my heart. I can't change my heart without changing my confessions. And, I can't change my confessions without knowing God's word. And, I have to confess God's word EVEN when my heart doesn't want to, even when I'm depressed, and distressed, and angry, and hurt. When I learn to confess and have faith His word is true and it does not, I repeat, it does not come back void, but accomplishes "*that which* [He] please[s], *and it shall prosper in the thing whereto* [He] *sent it*" (Isaiah 55:11), then I will be able to walk in victory!!!!!!! Yes, Lord!!!!!! Yes, Lord!!!!!! Oh, thank You, Jesus!

## HEBREWS 4:14-16 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6, PART ONE

(Hebrews 4:14-16 KJV) <sup>14</sup>*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* <sup>15</sup>*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* <sup>16</sup>*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6 KJV) <sup>3</sup>*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:* <sup>4</sup>*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)* <sup>5</sup>*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;* <sup>6</sup>*And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

As I have gone through recent struggles and listened to the struggles of those around me, I find myself pondering these verses. Sometimes, I will find myself in a position where I wish I could wave a magic wand or say some magic spell that would just make all the pain I or others feel go away. Though we aren't "Bewitched" or "Samantha, the Teenage Witch", we are something far better. We are children of the Most High God. And, in His word are promises that are ours, waiting to be claimed – promises far better than any magic wand we could wave or any magic spell we could chant. As a matter of fact, He promises us His word does not come back void, but it accomplishes what He sends it forth to do (Isaiah 55:11). So, over the next few of studies, I'm going to focus in on these two scriptures and see what God is saying to me.

Let's begin with Hebrews. Here, we are told there is place we can go "*in time of need.*" That place is the throne of grace. This is the place we can go when we are "*work[ing] out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.*" I know for me, it's these times I find myself in my most need. The times when things aren't going as I think they should; and as a result, I begin to feel the affects of the war between my flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:7). And, I guess, as I look at life around me, the people I see (including me), in general, spend too much time fighting people, when it reality, it's not them we should be fighting, for the scriptures tell us our battle is not "*against flesh and blood*" (people), but "*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*" (Ephesians 6:12).

However, it is so much easier for us to focus on what others are doing "to" us in a situation than to focus on the spiritual forces at work and what God is doing "in" us. Lord knows I am a professional at that. As my husband points out, even when I'm acknowledging my wrong doings, I have to make sure I let the other person know what I believe he or she did wrong as well. I find it hard to just examine myself as I am told to do in 2 Corinthians 13:5. I have to examine the other fellow too. After all, that's a lot more fun than being in the boat of blame all by myself. Besides, I'm not one who likes to be lonely, so I make sure I bring company in that boat with me.

However, God is teaching me some things, through the wise counsel of my husband, about 1) not always trying to cast blame in a situation, and 2) just how destructive that trait is, not only to me, but to others who experience the same thing. As I sit here, this analogy comes to mind. If we are all like plants, and God's word is the water we need to grow, how we will grow if we continually divert our water supply to the plant next to us? In other words, in every situation, the word of God has an opportunity to wash us clean, so we may grow in Christ. But, if we deflect that washing by not acting on God's word for our life, but instead, choosing to focus on what someone else is doing wrong, how will we grow? And, if we don't grow, how can we ever help someone else? More and more, I am learning it's your walk and not your talk that's the real witness of Jesus in your life.

Exercise your faith. That's what comes to my mind. So, I looked up the word "exercise" and found some interesting scriptures:

*(Acts 24:16 KJV) And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

*(1 Timothy 4:7-8 KJV) <sup>7</sup>But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. <sup>8</sup>For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

These scriptures truly help me to put things into perspective. Although I have the knowledge in my head there are certain things I have to do in this walk, there are times I believe I tend to sit back and "wait on the Lord", but not the way I am supposed to wait. In going to the scripture in Isaiah (40:31), I find the word "wait" is not a wholly passive word to me. Its original definition implies we must bind together with the Lord, that we must expect. So, there is action on our part. We are not just passively sitting and waiting. Even in expecting, I believe we are exercising faith. And, exercise is work....*"working out your salvation."*

Now, I'm not saying there are not times when we are to correct others, because there are, as referenced in Galatians 6:1. But, restoring someone in humility and complaining about someone else's faults, I am finding are two totally different things. And, there are two things that immediately come to mind that help me to understand the difference: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and Jesus in the wilderness.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve fell into sin. They were faced with a situation where they had to make a choice. Eve was questioned about what the word of God said. She did not fully understand what was said, since she added to God's word ("we can't touch it") (Genesis 3:3). And, eventually, she chose to do what God had said not to do (eat fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil); Adam followed suit. And, when confronted, neither of them accepted responsibility for their behavior. Eve blamed the serpent, and indirectly, Adam blamed God, "It was the woman You gave me, God" (Genesis 3:12). My husband and I were talking about this just the other day, and he asked me a most interesting question. What would have happened if Adam and Eve had just confessed their sin and repented? Hmm. We'll never know, but we do know what happened in the wilderness with Jesus.

Once again, the devil was at work. He came at Jesus with the word of God just as he had with Eve. But, instead of falling into sin, Jesus countered the enemy with the truth of God's word. He was not fooled into using God's word to act in a way that would "tempt" God. Instead, Jesus chose to act on the word of God that protected Him from sin. He took responsibility for His actions and for knowing the word of God. And, because of that (and the remaining unfolding events of His life), He is our Great High Priest *"who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"* (Romans 8:34).

You know, as I think about it, what does it really mean to have Jesus as our High Priest making intercession for us? Some would say He is praying to the Father on our behalf. I can't honestly say I think that's what these scriptures mean. I think if we look at verse 15 in Hebrews 4, we find what His intercession means to us. Before Jesus died on the cross, the saints of old had to go to the high priest who would approach God on their behalf for the remission of their sins. But, when Jesus shed His blood on Calvary's Cross and presented that blood at the heavenly altar, He made it possible for us to *"come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (v16). Wow! That's an awesome statement when you think about it. Because of Jesus interceding on our behalf with His one-time perfect sacrifice, the door stands open, so we may petition our Father anytime, anywhere. We don't have to wait. Wow! I like that. So much of this is really coming alive for me, and I like that! So, I think this is an excellent place to pause during this study.

## HEBREWS 4:14-16 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6, PART TWO

(Hebrews 4:14-16 KJV) <sup>14</sup>*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* <sup>15</sup>*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* <sup>16</sup>*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6 KJV) <sup>3</sup>*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:* <sup>4</sup>*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)* <sup>5</sup>*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;* <sup>6</sup>*And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

It's been several days since I worked on the first part of this scripture study. And, I find there are still many aspects going through my head. There are so many things to be learned from these scriptures (and the ones unfolding during this study), but let's just take a moment and recap before we go forward.

First of all, I think several key points from the last study need to be recaptured. One, we find in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned, and following that sin, neither accepted responsibility for their actions. They pointed the finger elsewhere. Yet, Jesus was able to not sin in the wilderness when the enemy came at Him trying to twist the word of God. For me, this shows me, when we are willing to stand on the word of God, we are accepting responsibility for our actions. But, when we fail to follow God's word, our natural tendency is to look at what someone else did, or the circumstances around us that "caused" us to behave the way we did. God's word is true, and if we follow it, we give ourselves an opportunity to be washed clean by that word. But, if we place the blame elsewhere, we lose the opportunity to be blessed by the growth God's word produces in our lives.

Two, because Jesus was obedient to the word of God "*even unto death*", He opened the door for us to be able to "*come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*" In other words, He is the gateway by which we can ask for help from our heavenly Father. He intercedes (holds the door open) between the Father and us, because without His blood, we would not be able to go into the Father's presence.

So, with that in mind, let's further examine Hebrews 4:14 and see what it really means. What are this "mercy" and this "grace"? Well, "mercy" means "compassion", and "grace" means "graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative, or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude)." Now, that's a mouth full. And, there are two things I find interesting in these definitions.

First, we obtain “mercy” or “compassion”. Now according to Merriam-Webster Online, “compassion” means “sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.” Now, at the throne of grace, we know God is both sympathetic [Jesus was tested in all points] and seeking to alleviate our distress. But, how does He do this? He allows us to “find grace”, but before we deal with the issue of grace, I can’t resist looking at what Merriam-Webster Online says about “find.”

There are several definitions, but here’s the one I like: “to come upon by searching or effort.” So, while it can be accidental that we “find” something, we can also find something by searching for it. Hmm. Very interesting. And, what immediately comes to mind is Philippians 2:12 where we are told to work out our **own** salvation with fear and trembling. So, is it possible it’s the grace we find at the throne that allows us to do just that? I believe the very definition tells us it is, since this “divine influence upon the heart” should manifest itself with a “reflection in the life”. This is the second thing I find interesting - His grace should have some kind of influence in our lives others can see. Oh, and let’s not overlook, we should have gratitude. A grateful heart will act much differently than an ungrateful heart. But, what should I be grateful for?

Well, first of all, I believe I should be grateful for the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, and the resulting opportunity to go boldly to the throne of grace whenever I need help. I should not receive that grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1), thus keeping Jesus on the cross. I should receive that grace with a grateful heart, knowing that His blood has redeemed me. As a result, I should know I can overcome, because “*greater is He that is in [me], than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). I should be grateful, because I know Jesus is interceding for me, so I can overcome!

See, the story didn’t end when He died on the cross! Jesus was resurrected, and that same resurrection power is in our lives...the Holy Spirit. He not only raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11), but He also empowers us to be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8). We are to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4), but that newness only comes with a change. We have to die to self before we can live for Christ. And, that is HARD! The older we get, the harder it gets, because, that fleshly nature within us is not going to go down without a fight. But, when the Spirit wins, there is a resulting change in our lives, and this, I believe is how we truly glorify the Father.

Yet, sometimes, it is so hard to look past the things our flesh is telling us, especially when it’s a situation or person constantly before us. Our natural desire is to fight that person that is “getting on our nerves” or to blame the situation we are in. We either don’t understand or don’t want to acknowledge it’s neither of these things that are our real enemy, but it’s the spiritual forces at work around us we need to combat, which will be the next scripture study. And, I believe, that it is only when we begin to walk in this revelation, we will be able to show the love of God that abides in us, for “...*God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*” (1 John 4:16).

**HEBREWS 4:14-16 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6, PART THREE**

(2 Corinthians 10:3-6 KJV) <sup>3</sup>*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:*  
<sup>4</sup>*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)* <sup>5</sup>*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;* <sup>6</sup>*And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Up until this point, the focus has primarily been the throne of grace in Hebrews 4:14. But, what I would like to look at now is who our real enemy is. What are we fighting against when we go to the throne of grace to “*obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need?*” We are told in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 our enemy is not the flesh and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. But, what does this really mean?

First, let’s examine some of these key words to better understand what we are being told:

“flesh”: “(by implication) human nature (with its frailties [physical or morally] and passions)”

“carnal”: “...pertaining to flesh...”

“mighty”: “powerful or capable”

“strong holds”: “(meaning to fortify, through the idea of holding safely); a castle (figuratively. argument)”

“casting”: “to lower (or with violence) demolish”

“imaginations”: “computation, i.e. (figuratively) reasoning (conscience, conceit)”

“high thing”: “an elevated place or thing, i.e. (abstract) altitude, or (by implication) a barrier (figuratively)”

“exalt”: “to raise up (literally or figuratively)”

“thought”: “a perception, i.e. purpose, or (by implication) the intellect, disposition, itself”

“obedience”: “attentive hearkening, i.e. (by implication) compliance or submission”

“Christ”: “anointed”

“revenge”: “to vindicate, retaliate, punish”

“disobedience”: “inattention, i.e. (by implication) disobedience”

Now, working within the parameters of those definitions, I find some very interesting things. First, when referring to “flesh” we are referring to our human nature as well as our outward skin. We know God created man from the dust, and He breathed His Spirit into him and man became a living being (soul). So, here we see the triune nature of man: body, spirit, and soul. That’s the order they appear in the scriptures. And, of these three, our flesh (skin and human nature) is how we relate to the world. We experience things through our five senses and then make our decisions and react according to those experiences. No wonder our initial inclination in a situation is to “war after the flesh”.

However, we know this is not what we should war after. Our weapons are not “carnal” or of a “fleshly” nature. They are “spiritual” weapons. And, they are “powerful or capable” through God to pull down “argument[s]” that we establish in our mind that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. In addition, these weapons also bring our “perception[s]” into the “compliance or submission” of the “anointing”. But, let’s examine this before we go on to the rest of the scripture.

We have here reference to “strong holds”, “imagination”, and “thoughts”. And, from our definitions, we know certain things. One, the essence of a “strong hold” is a safe place. Two, an “imagination” is a “reasoning”. And, three, a “thought” is a “perception”. Okay, let’s further define “reasoning” and “perception” according to Merriam-Webster Online.

“reasoning”: “to talk with another so as to influence his actions or opinions”; “to use the faculty of reason so as to arrive at conclusions” among other definitions

“perception”: basically means an awareness

Working with these definitions, I would ascertain a strong hold is a safe place within our mind where we store our awareness of and the resulting conclusions about certain matters. Now, based on this scripture, these strong holds can contain reasoning that “*exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.*” In other words, the reasoning we have is not based on the word of God. And, the resulting thoughts from our faulty reasoning must now be brought into submission of the anointing.

We know from the word of God the Holy Spirit is our teacher (John 14:26). So, if this is the case, how are these “strong holds” created within our mind. By the very definition of faith, we have to believe in what is not seen (Hebrews 11:1). But, somewhere along the way, these unseen things become doctrines and philosophies that don’t necessarily line up with what God is trying to reveal to us by the anointing. So, how do you know when you’re right or when you’re wrong? I often ask myself that, because strong holds can be a dangerous thing that block our blessings. On the other hand, we don’t want to find ourselves lacking faith. Either way, we often block God’s hand in our lives by the very things we believe in or don’t believe in, thus the strong holds that need to be pulled down.

One of the things I am working on in my own life is whenever I come against a situation I feel adamantly about, based on the word of God, I go to God in prayer. I am learning how to release these things to Him and then ask Him to reveal the truth of His word to me. For instance, there are times when my husband and I will totally disagree on an issue, both of us using the word as our basis. I have found when I am willing to let go of what I believe is right and to let God orchestrate the situation, He does just that. Sometimes, He changes my mind; sometimes, He changes my husband's mind. But, in all cases, a higher level of His word is revealed to us than we understood before.

I think the basis of what we need to really believe is Jesus suffered, died, and God raised Him from the dead for our sins. We must believe in the Lord Jesus and the resurrection; otherwise, there is no hope for our eternity. But, outside of that, what makes us Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant, and the list goes on, appear to be the things that create some of these strong holds in our minds. For instance, some believe in the gifts of the Spirit; some don't. Some believe in once-saved-always-saved; some don't. Some believe in tithes; some don't. But, I don't think it's any of these things that are the way to salvation. For, the scriptures tell us we are only saved by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-10). So, with that being said, all these other issues seem only to divide the body of Christ and keep us from growing to our full potential in Jesus.

I also believe these "strong holds" we form in our minds are what cause us to war after the flesh. I know for me, it's those times I truly believe I am justified by the word, I have the hardest time letting go of an issue, and I spend weeks, months, years sometimes, struggling with something until I finally decide to lay it down at the feet of Jesus and let Him show me what it is He wants me to learn. Only then, do I grow in my Christian walk. But, until I am ready to let go of my perceptions, my thoughts, and my beliefs in the situation, I continue to struggle.

So, what's the answer? Anytime we find ourselves in a struggle, we must ask ourselves, "Have I created a strong hold within my mind I am not willing to let go of? Is this strong hold causing me to have thoughts that are exalted against the knowledge of God? Am I being obedient to Christ in my thoughts?" And, once we ask ourselves these questions, we need to go to the throne of grace and ask for help. We need to ask God to reveal His truth to us, by His Spirit with confirmation in His word. We need to ask God to help us to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of any virtue and of any praise (Philippians 4:8). By doing this, our thoughts will be obedient to Christ. Our mind will be renewed by the word, and we will free the Holy Spirit to work on our behalf, which leads me to the part of this scripture I find most interesting.

In verse six, we find, *"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."* Now, here is my question: Who has in readiness to *"revenge all disobedience?"* So, I looked in both the Amplified and the New International Version for an answer. And, it appears the meaning behind that is those who are in disobedience will be punished by those in authority, but only after "obedience" has been secured. In other words, it sounds like they (the authorities) couldn't punish the disobedient until someone became obedient. I believe that's how it works overall with God. The scripture that comes to mind is, *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written,*

*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*” (Romans 12:19 KJV). So, if we seek our own “*revenge [against] all disobedience,*” how will the Lord avenge us as He has promised? Interesting.

As I conclude this study, there are two things impressed upon my heart. First, as surely as the sun rises, I will be tested on this study. Every time the word is sown, the enemy immediately comes to test that word in our lives (Mark 4). Our choice determines the condition of our heart. May my heart be found to be “good ground” that I may bring forth fruit thereof.

Second, the more I study, the more I realize scripture often gives us the problem and the solution. But, for some reason, I never really noticed that before. It wasn’t until recently as I was listening to a sermon when this was pointed out. And, as my awareness has risen, I have noticed this is often true. If we look to the word, we can find the problem and the solution to the problem. Then, we must act on that solution in order for the word to be of any affect in our lives. It’s not just knowing the word, but doing the word that affects a change in our lives.

I know with me, I can remember scripture, but then trying to apply it in my life to where it means something gets really hard. That’s the difference in knowledge (logos) and application (rhema). My husband used to call me academic all the time, and I never understood what he meant. Recently, we were talking, and I finally understood. There is a lot I knew (and still know) about the word, but then I wasn’t applying it in my life. And, then God began to deal with me on my thoughts. I had heard so many teachings on your thoughts, and I knew of the scripture He was impressing upon me. But, there was no change in my life, so I had asked Him what was I doing wrong. Why weren’t things changing for me? And, I truly believe He answered me with Philippians 4:8 and the resulting scripture study, which has led to this series of studies.

Now, I’m still working this thing that He’s placed in me out, but it’s coming more and more clear to me. And, something my mother said to me not long ago really helped to make it even clearer. She was telling me of a sermon she heard and how the pastor talked about giving voice to thoughts the enemy puts in your head. Once we give them voice, they now have power in our lives. I can look back on my life and see so many times a thought, once voiced, became reality. But, it’s so difficult to get past our feelings when these thoughts are being placed in our mind (by whichever of the five sense gates they come) and rebuke them in our minds before we give voice (and subsequent validity) to them.

So, as I close out this study I know the next study I want to do is Philippians 2:14-16:

*<sup>14</sup>Do all things without murmurings and disputings: <sup>15</sup>That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; <sup>16</sup>Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

My, my, how we come in full circle....let us “*receive not the grace of God in vain,*” but “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*”

## PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16

(Philippians 2:14-16 KJV) <sup>14</sup>*Do all things without murmurings and disputings:* <sup>15</sup>*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;* <sup>16</sup>*Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

As God has been teaching me things through His word, I believe He has been seeking to grow me in the specific area of my mind. For, I am one who suffers extreme attacks in the mind. Before I knew about relationship with Jesus, I was often attacked in my mind by thoughts of failure, suicide, and hopelessness. I eventually overcame most of this, but there was a hardening of my heart that resulted. So, when I began to develop my relationship with Jesus, it was difficult to receive His word, because I had a stony heart, not one of flesh. However, I would often do things by the word, but without the word implanted in my heart. The issues that flowed from my heart were not ones of love, but were negative and destructive.

Since I have embarked on this study of the mind, which began with Philippians 4:6-8, that tells us what types of things to think upon, I now find myself here, at Philippians 2:14-16, that deals with attitudes of the heart while we do the things that we do. So, I'd like to journey through these scriptures to see what they are saying to me.

When we take a cursory look at the words, we are told to *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings"* and then we are told why. So, *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."* But, I think what happens is instead of us bringing the light to the darkness, we let the darkness blow out our bulb. Instead of overcoming our circumstances, our circumstances overcome us.

As I think about it, it hurts my heart I have so little faith in Jesus. Yes, I'm human. And, that's the excuse I often use. And, while I know I will not be perfect on this side of heaven, I do pray I will one day learn to stand under the trials a little better. Are not the trials of life a test of our faith? (James 1:2-3). I want to learn how to count it all joy when I find myself being tempted, because I know that, in the end, I will grow from the "trying of my faith." Not only are we told this in the book of James, but we are also told this in Romans 5:3-5:

<sup>3</sup>*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;* <sup>4</sup>*And patience, experience; and experience, hope:* <sup>5</sup>*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (KJV).*

And, that's what I want: the love of God to be *"shed abroad"* in my heart. And, I believe Philippians tells me one of the ways I can do this. See, if I do things without complaining, bitterness, nor anger, nor resentment is poured into my heart by the words I speak from my mouth that began in the dark recesses of my mind. Taking it even further, the Amplified version

states, *“Do all things without grumbling and faultfinding and complaining [against God] and questioning and doubting among yourselves.”* So, are we complaining against God when we grumble about our circumstances? Does He not know we are in the circumstance we are in? Are we exercising more faith in our circumstances than in Him when we grumble and complain? Hmm. Let’s examine the original language of this text to see what we discover.

*<sup>14</sup>Do all things without murmurings and disputings : <sup>15</sup>That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; <sup>16</sup>Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

“murmuring”: “grumbling”

“disputings”: “discussion, i.e. (internal) consideration (by implication purpose), or (external) debate:--dispute, doubtful (-ing), imagination, reasoning, thought”

“sons”: “a child (as produced)”

“crooked”: “warped, i.e. winding; figuratively perverse”

“perverse”: “to distort, i.e. (figuratively) misinterpret, or (morally) corrupt”

“lights”: “an illuminator”

“word”: “something said (including the thought)”

“vain”: “empty”

“run”: “have course”

“laboured”: “to feel fatigue; by implication to work hard”

I find some very intriguing principles at work in these definitions. First of all, it intrigues me I am back at the words “imagination”, “reasoning”, and “thought”. These were part of my last study on 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. A part of that study focused on strongholds, how they are formed, and how these three “things” are key in their formation and in their breaking down. It is most intriguing to once again walk around that same circle...the circle of the word. Scripture makes sense in light of other scripture. One scripture begins to make more sense when you begin to see the bigger picture that is painted when other scriptures are combined.

At any rate, if we do things without grumbling about it and without having a discussion about it, either within our own minds or with others, I believe we will help to prevent some of the strong holds that form in our mind. Instead, we will produce within ourselves (as children of God) an illuminating light others will see and want to emulate. This is what will draw the unbeliever to Jesus. And, this is a good place to take special note of John 12:32-36:

*<sup>32</sup>And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. <sup>33</sup>This he said, signifying what death he should die. <sup>34</sup>The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? <sup>35</sup>Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. <sup>36</sup>While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

In verse 35, Jesus said they had the light with them for a little while, and they had to walk while they had the light *“lest darkness come upon you.”* And, I believe most would agree this world is definitely a “warped”, “distorted”, and “corrupt” place that is full darkness. What was once horrifying to the masses is now readily acceptable. We consistently feed ourselves with things of this world, and then we ask ourselves why we are not growing in Christ (in our anointing). Could it be we are choking out the light with the darkness we feed upon? Should we not pay attention more to what God’s word has to say about something than we do? Too often, I believe if we don’t like what God’s word says, then we find ways to justify it, if by nothing else, saying, “God knows my heart.” Yes, He does. And, He knows what’s in my heart. And, as my husband and I were discussing the other day, if hell is still in my heart, that’s just how I’m going to live. And, if that’s how I’m living, why should I be surprised when the Lord tells me to “Depart”, for He never knew me (Matthew 7:23).

Wow! As I think about that, it kinda gets my attention on a whole new level. Philippians talks about “running” and “labouring” in vain. In other words, our works are empty. Oh. Wow! I know the scriptures talk about our works being burned in the fire in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. And, it seems like we are taking that scripture to say we can live any way we wish, and still be saved. But, what’s coming out here, for me, is there are things we will have done that will be burned in the fire. But, if our heart was truly turned towards God, those things will be the by-product of us working out our salvation with fear and trembling. But, if our hearts are not turned towards God, and we try to do good works, but don’t have a truly repentant heart (with a resulting lifestyle change), that’s when we run and labour in vain. We can prophesy all day long, but if there is not love in our heart, we are likened to a “resounding gong” or “clanging symbol” in 1 Corinthians 13:1. Empty sound. That’s what comes to mind. The echoing of the gong or the symbol in the emptiness that surrounds it. Is that how I want to be seen? As a “resounding gong” or “clanging symbol”. God, no.

Hmm. Now, I know what my husband has been trying to tell me for years. I have been that “resounding gong” and that “clanging symbol”. I would walk around the house doing things, but complaining the whole time. Most of what came out of my mouth was negative. And, the tones of voice the Lord has opened my ears to over these past few months are horrendous. So, I confess my sins to my Father, and I ask that He would cleanse me of my sin and of all unrighteousness, as His word promises. And, I look forward to the change that is going to take place, that has already begun, that I may walk with the love of God *“shed abroad”* in my heart *“by the Holy Ghost which is given unto”* me. Thank You, Jesus for being the living Word that cleanses and washes us whiter than snow.

## **CHAPTER 6 – THE WEAPONS OF MY WARFARE**

# EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART ONE

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

As I have begun to study out different things in the scriptures, I find myself at this point where I need to truly understand about the weapons of my warfare. I remember when I was in Germany, my mentor gave me a prayer on the armor. And, when I began to pray this prayer in my life each day, I noticed a difference. Somewhere along the way, I stopped praying the armor in my life, and I have noticed a difference there as well. So, it's time for me to get a better understanding of the armor of God, that this word may not just be "logos" or logical word in my life, but that it may be "rhema" or life-changing word in my life. So, let's begin this journey and see where it takes us.

6:10 – Here we are being told to be "*strong in the Lord*" AND "*in the power of his might*." So, what exactly does it mean to be "*strong in the Lord*?" The word "strong" here means "to empower:--enable, (increase in) strength (-en), be (make) strong." And, the word "Lord" here is referring to "supreme in authority, i.e. (as noun) controller." Putting this together, it would seem we are being told we are to be empowered by this supreme authority in our lives, and He is to be the controller (pilot) of our lives. Now, let's see what "*power of his might*" means. Wow. The word "power" here is defined as "vigor ["great"] (literally or figuratively):--dominion, might [-ily], power, strength." And, when I saw the word "vigor" it really caught my attention. So, what about "might?" It translates to "forcefulness". So, the "*power of his might*" is the "dominion of his forcefulness" in our lives. How much control and how much dominion do we give Him each day in our lives? Hmm.

6:11 – As I have learned with scripture, we have been told to do something in verse 10 and now we find the how in verse 11. To be "*strong in the Lord, and the power of his might*," we must "*put on the whole armour of God*." Why? So, we "*may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*." It doesn't say part of the armour. It says the whole armour. "Put" is an action word. So, there is an action we must carry out in our lives. Looking up the word "put", we find a very rich meaning: "(in the sense of sinking into a garment); to invest with clothing (literally or figuratively):--array, clothe (with), endue, have (put) on." We are to array ourselves with certain clothing. And, God has provided us this clothing. It's so ironic to me how different things keep coming back. During the study in Isaiah (25 September 2002), we found God has given us

*“beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”* (61:3 KJV). Now, I don’t want to get too deep into this right now, but I do want to bring out two things. One, I like the “sense of sinking into a garment” in the definition of “put”, because it brings that sense of when you snuggle down into a warm, oversized, coat, and you get that safe and secure feeling. I think that’s how we should be with God; we should “snuggle into Him” where He surrounds us just like that big coat. But, His warmth is, oh, so much better than any physical garment we can wear. The second thing I get out of this is God has given us a “garment”, or covering, of some kind to combat every negative (or unclean) spirit and influence that comes against us in our lives. The key is to learn what our “garments” are and to wear them - starting with here, where we are told to put on the armour to withstand the wiles of the devil. So, the thing that comes immediately to my mind is if we have on our armour, maybe, we won’t have such a hard time when the negative influences come into our lives.

Now, before I get to the next verse, I want to take a moment to look at the words “stand”, “wiles, and “devil”.

“stand”: “to stand (transitive or intransitive), used in various applications (literally or figuratively):--abide, appoint, bring, continue, covenant, establish, hold up, lay, present, set (up), stanch, stand (by, forth, still, up)”

“wiles”: “travelling over, i.e. travesty (trickery):--wile, lie in wait”

“devil”: “false accuser, devil, slanderer”

I find it very interesting the word “stand” has such a rich meaning, especially as this word is also translated as “covenant”. That’s a word I think we have really lost sight of, so I looked it up in the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary to get a fuller meaning. Here is what I found:

**“1** : a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement : COMPACT [*which means “predominately formed or filled” and “having a dense structure or parts or units closely packed or joined” among other things*]

**2 a** : a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action **b** : the common-law action to recover damages for breach of such a contract”

Hmm. So, it would seem this standing we are doing actually establishes something in our lives. And, it appears to be part of a covenant. I think there is something stirring there, but it just hasn’t taken shape yet. Lord, Thy will be done. What we do know is we are to stand and we are to stand “against” something. I think it’s important to note here that contained within the definition for “against” is “of direction.” So, our direction is to be away from and not towards the trickery of the false accuser, or slanderer, as he lies in wait for those whom he may devour. There are two scriptures that immediately come to mind.

(Isaiah 28:10 KJV) *For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.*

*(1 Peter 5:8 KJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

I think the precept upon precept came to mind, because of how circular the scriptures seem to me. More and more it seems the more I study, the more certain things keep coming back. And, once again, scripture is making sense in light of other scripture. “Precept upon precept”, which brings to mind building blocks. Each scripture is a building block (precept) for another scripture (precept). This just totally fascinates me for some reason, though I can’t fully explain why. But, I think this is an excellent place to take a break in this study.

## EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART TWO

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

I ended the last study at verse 11, so I'm going to pick up now with verse 12. I believe this verse holds the key to learning the difference in "warring after the flesh" and "warring in the Spirit". I mentioned before we often direct our washing by the water of the word unto others when we focus on what they are doing "to" us and not what God is doing "in" us. And, I believe this scripture holds the key to defining that. So, let's begin.

6:12 – Here we are being told why we must put on the whole armour of God...because we "*wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*". So, let's define some words to see what we are being told here.

"wrestle": this is a combination of two words that combined mean wrestle. So, let's look up the Merriam-Webster online definition. The two definitions I found the most interesting were: "to combat an opposing tendency or force <*wrestling* with his conscience>" and "to engage in deep thought, consideration, or debate."

"flesh": "flesh (as stripped of the skin), i.e. (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food), or (by extension) the body (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as the symbol of what is external"

"blood": "blood, literally (of men or animals)"

"principalities": "a commencement, or (concretely) chief (in various applications of order, time, place or rank) [with "commencement" ultimately meaning "to have or make a beginning"]

"powers": "(in the sense of ability); privilege, i.e. (subjectively) force, capacity, competency, freedom, or (objectively) mastery (concretely. magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control), delegated influence" ["Potentate"

means “**RULER, SOVEREIGN**; broadly : one who wields great power or sway”]

“rulers”: “a world-ruler, an epithet of Satan”

“darkness”: “shadiness, i.e. obscurity (literally or figuratively)”

“world”: “an age”... “specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future)”

“spiritual”: “non-carnal, i.e. (humanly) ethereal (as opposed to gross), or (daemoniacally) a spirit (concretely), or (divinely) supernatural, regenerate, religious”

“wickedness”: “depravity, i.e. (specifically) malice; plural (concretely) plots, sins”

“high places”: “above the sky:--celestial, (in) heaven (-ly), high”

Father, that’s a lot to take in all at once. I’m going to save the “principalities”, “powers”, and “rulers of darkness” for another day. But for now, in breaking it down, the essence of what it says IS just what it says. It’s not flesh and blood (or people) we are fighting against. Instead, we are fighting against forces ruled by Satan and operate in the heavenly realm. And, it is obvious here this definition is not referring to the soul of man when it says flesh, but it is literally referring to other people. In other words, it’s not what’s going on within our soul, but the circumstances and people we find ourselves “warring” with. So, when I’m angry with someone, my fight is not against them, but against the spiritual forces at work in the situation.

Now, granted, I do believe the soul of man comes into play because of the decisions we make, but ultimately, it appears here, it’s the spiritual forces at work driving the situation. While the person has to have something within them for the spiritual forces to work with, it’s not the person setting the environment, but the spiritual forces. And, because their mind has not been renewed, or there is some “lust” within them drawing them away from Christ to act in the way they are, we end up on the receiving end of their behavior, or they of ours. But, Praise God, because He has given us what we need to combat these attacks. The key is for us to not respond in the “flesh” of our souls, but to respond in the Spirit.

What immediately comes to mind is Romans 8 with the key verses being “<sup>5</sup>*For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* <sup>6</sup>*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*” So, when we respond to someone in the way God intended, we find “*life and peace.*” It’s most interesting that these two things are coupled together.

6:13 – Again, we are told how to do what we are being told to do. Since we are not to “*wrestle against flesh and blood*”, what are we to do? We are to “*take unto*” us the whole armour of God. And once again, we are being given the responsibility for this, because “take” is an action word. I wanted to get the deeper meaning behind it, so I looked up the original word and found

“to take up:--receive up, take (in, unto, up).” So, it’s not something that just happens to us, but it is a conscience choice we have to make. Just as the soldier had to put on his armour, we must put on ours. Now, I don’t know this one for sure, but what I see in my mind is someone trying to get his armour on, but there are things he needs help with. So, there is someone there to assist him as he fully suits up. This brings to mind a cooperative effort between us and the Holy Spirit. We can’t necessarily put our armour on by ourselves. It takes us allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to clothe us in God’s armour, because He is our Teacher and our Comforter (John 14:16-26). And, He is the Spirit we are to walk after. Not our spirits, but the Spirit of God. For, I believe it is through Him we receive our empowering grace from God.

I need to back up a minute in my mind. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16 KJV). Um. What is stirring within me is when we go to the *“throne of grace...and find grace to help in time of need”*, what we are finding is the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives. When you go before the throne, you get into God’s presence. Um. Oh wow! What is stirring right now is so encouraging to me, because I immediately went back in my mind to a previous study on that verse. And, I am reminded “grace” means “graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude).” I didn’t see it before, but I believe the “divine influence upon the heart” is the Holy Spirit, because He is the only one that can truly change our hearts. I believe He is the only one that can change logos word to rhema word in our lives. Without the understanding that comes from Him, the bible is just a book, and no matter how much you read it nor how much of it you memorize and study, without His help, they are just words and your life does not change. And, I can truly bear witness to that in my life. It wasn’t until I came to know the Holy Spirit that my life began to change at all. And, it’s been a hard road, but He has been diligent and faithful with me, and He has opened up things to me over time as I have sought to learn. But, it’s only when I’m in a receiving mode that He will impart any understanding, wisdom, or knowledge into my life. Oh wow! I am overwhelmed by this. Thank You, Lord.

Getting back to this verse, we are once again told why we must put on the whole armour – that we *“may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* Now, I find it interesting we are told to “withstand” AND to “stand”. “Stand” is the same word as used before, but let’s look at some others:

“withstand”: “to stand against, i.e. oppose:--resist, withstand”

“evil”: “hurtful, i.e. evil (probably in effect or influence)”

“done”: “to work fully, i.e. accomplish; by implication to finish, fashion:--cause, do (deed), perform, work (out).”

“all”: “absolutely all or (singular) every one”

Hmm. It’s very intriguing a part of the definition of “evil” is “hurtful”, because it surely does hurt when someone does something against you. But, here we are being told to “oppose” or

“resist” during these “hurtful” times, and once we’ve done everything we could do, we are to “stand.” And, I believe what is being said here is we are to stand in “covenant” relationship with the Lord Jesus knowing He is our Lord, and He will “save” us in the situation. It may not always be how we expect to be saved, but it may be He is working through the Holy Spirit to help us “work something” out of us that keeps us from developing a deeper relationship with Him and, ultimately, with the Father. So, it seems to me there are some choices we have to make in order to “withstand”, and after we’ve made the right choices based on God’s word, we are then to “stand” in Christ and let Him do the rest by the working of the Holy Spirit in the situation. After all, we know God’s word does not come back unto Him void, but accomplishes what He sends it forth to do (Isaiah 55:11); so, it would appear the choice we need to make is to release the word of God into the situation. Once we have done that, we have “done all” and now we can “stand” on His word, for His word and His promises are true.

### EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART THREE

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

Wow. It's been 18 days since I worked on part two of this study. And, the biggest reason is I have been focused on starting my own business, and it has been all-consuming with me trying to learn and to do the things I am learning. See, here I have a serious confession to make unto myself and unto the Lord and anyone else who may ever read this. My husband and I were talking last night, and we've been talking about this for a few days now. But, the bottom line is money has become my focus, and even in the vision God gave me for my business, it was already becoming about the money. We have debts, and I want to get out of debt. And, that's been the focus of me learning how to "be" something, so I can make money to help us get out of debt. Now, in all honesty, it's not only about getting out of debt, because already, God has blessed me with some opportunities to share His word with others to lift up and encourage them. And, that is the first part of the vision of my business. And, what I need to focus on and to trust Him for is to provide the finances needed, not only to build my business to properly support my customers, but to bless those whom God lays it on my heart to bless as we are getting out of debt. With that confession out of the way, let's return to the study, for I truly believe timing is everything, and I believe I am right where I am supposed to be to get the most out of what God has for me in the remaining verses. I stopped at verse 13, so let's begin with verse 14 and see how far today's journey takes us.

6:14 – Hmm. Here's that word "stand" again. This is the third time in four verses we are told to stand. So, let's define this word again to refresh our memories of what it means.

"stand": "to stand (transitive or intransitive), used in various applications (literally or figuratively):--abide, appoint, bring, continue, covenant, establish, hold up, lay, present, set (up), stanch, stand (by, forth, still, up)"

As before, I believe a key aspect of this word "stand" is we are to stand in our covenant relationship with Jesus, the Anointed One and His Anointing, because only through Him do we have any hope of salvation. And, it's not just salvation for an eternal life with the Father I believe is at stake, but I also believe salvation is referring to deliverance from the every day situations that "hurt" us. So, here we are being told to stand and to have our "loins girt about

*with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness.*” Well, now, I find it interesting that the very first piece of armour mentioned is the girdle of truth immediately followed by the breastplate of righteousness. Now, I don’t know anything about medieval soldiers and in what order they put their armour on, but I do know Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6 KJV). Okay, so let’s see if the same word for truth is used in each scripture. Ooh. Okay. The word truth in John 14:6 is “aletheia, al-ay'-thi-a.” It comes from another word that means “truth:--true, X truly, truth, verity.” And, the word in Ephesians 6:14 is “aletheuo, al-ayth-yoo'-o,” which also comes from the same word as “aletheia”, but this time the definition is “to be true (in doctrine and profession):--speak (tell) the truth”. Oh wow! That just sends shivers up my spine. In essence, Jesus tells us in John He is truth, and Ephesians tells us to speak truth. So, the only way we can speak truth is to speak Jesus. And, the only way we can speak Jesus is if we know Him and are standing in covenant relationship with Him. By standing in our relationship with Him, we are made righteous through Him (Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21). But, oh, the thing that gets me is when I did a word search in the New Testament on “righteous” or “righteousness”, Romans 10:10 was in the mix. We often talk about Romans 10:9 in the salvation process, but we often leave off verse 10. Here they are together:

(Romans 10:9-10 KJV) *<sup>9</sup>That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. <sup>10</sup>For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Lord have mercy on us. I don’t know if I can even comprehend at this point everything in this. And, this is just the first two pieces of the armour. Lord, we are told to confess You with our mouth for salvation, and then we are told we believe *“unto righteousness”* with our hearts, and *“with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* Do you see it? Do you see what He’s telling us? Life and death are in the tongue. What’s in the heart is what we’re going to confess. Is Jesus really in our hearts! Or, are we just giving Him lip service? Oh Lord, are You really in my heart!? Am I standing when I’m supposed to be standing, or am I wrestling against flesh and blood? Because if He’s really in my heart and I have truly confessed Him as Lord, I am going to want to please Him. And, if I truly want to please Him, my resulting actions will say so. I’m not going to do things I KNOW displease Him, unless I don’t really care about Him anyway. That’s something I really need to take deep within myself and analyze my actions!

Okay, so we know we must girt our loins with truth and have on the breastplate of righteousness. So, let’s define these other words to get a better understanding of this whole verse, although I must admit, I am overwhelmed by just this little that has unfolded already.

“loins”: “of uncertain affinity; the loin (external), i.e. the hip; internal (by extension) procreative power:--loin”

“girt about”: “to gird all around, i.e. (middle or passive) to fasten on one's belt (literally or figuratively):--gird (about, self)”

“having”: “(in the sense of sinking into a garment); to invest with clothing (literally or figuratively):--array, clothe (with), endue, have (put) on”

“breastplate”: “of uncertain affinity; the chest ("thorax"), i.e. (by implication) a corslet:--breastplate”

“righteousness”: “equity (of character or act); specifically (Christian) justification:--righteousness”

So, here we see we are to protect our “procreative power” with truth and our chest which houses our heart with righteousness. This “righteousness” gives us “equity (of character or act).” With whom? With Christ! Um. The depth of this word is amazing to me. I need to absorb this and let the Holy Spirit work with my heart on what He has opened up to me, before I go on. Praise God for His word and for His Son who is the Living Word of God!

## EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART FOUR

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

Well, it's a brand new year. And, this is the year I would have been eligible to retire from the military. Yet, here I am a civilian and spending some quality time with my Father. And, I know I don't take advantage of this the way I should, as I already mentioned. But, when I do this, I am content. Truly content, so I thank God for this opportunity, and I ask that He would order my steps that I may give Him the best in me.

Although I left off with verse 14 in the last study, I'm going to stay with that verse for this study, because there was so much in there. And, at this point, I just don't feel like I'm seeing all I need to see, so let's go back, so I can see what I believe the Spirit of the Lord is trying to tell me.

In defining "loins", "girt about", "having", "breastplate", and "righteousness" last time, there were so many things that came to mind, even as I reread the definitions today to resume this study. So, I'm going to leave them here, and examine them again to see what unfolds before me.

"loins": "of uncertain affinity; the loin (externally), i.e. the hip; internally (by extension) procreative power:--loin"

"girt about": "to gird all around, i.e. (middle or passive.) to fasten on one's belt (literally or figuratively):--gird (about, self)"

"having": "(in the sense of sinking into a garment); to invest with clothing (literally or figuratively):--array, clothe (with), endue, have (put) on"

"breastplate": "of uncertain affinity; the chest ("thorax"), i.e. (by implication) a corslet:--breastplate"

"righteousness": "equity (of character or act); specifically (Christian) justification:--righteousness"

First, I want to go back to the issue of the “procreative power” as it relates to “truth”. In the gospel of John we find:

(John 1:1-5 KJV) *“<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>The same was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life; and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

(John 1:14 KJV) *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Now, we know these scriptures are referring to Jesus. So, I find it very intriguing that in the armour, we find truth related to the loins. See, the above scriptures take me all the way back to the book of Genesis, when God created the heavens and the earth. Here, we are told *“all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* And, what this does for me is confirm the fact that where we stand in our relationship with Jesus will determine how successful we are in our “stand against the devil”.

Look at it. “Truth” is the very first part of the armour. Why did the writer not say, “having your loins girt about with righteousness?” You can’t get righteousness without being in covenant relationship with Jesus. And, you surely can’t wear any other piece of the armour without Him. So, what I’m seeing in all of this is the armour is progressive, each piece goes in a certain order, and you have to have the right piece(s) on before you can put on the next piece. I’ve often heard about the order a Roman soldier put his armour on. And, though I haven’t researched it myself, I have been told the progression is much (if not) the same as the progression of the physical armour we see in Ephesians.

Nevertheless, I do believe we must first understand one precept (or piece of armour), before we are ready to move onto the next precept (or piece of armour). And, I truly believe that’s where many of us fail. We try to put the whole thing on not understanding the foundational truth of Jesus. He is not truly in our hearts, but only on our lips. And, then we make a bunch of excuses for our behavior instead of asking the Father what is He trying to work out in us. Lord knows, I am queen of that, because it is so hard to accept responsibility for my unacceptable behavior. It makes me feel bad about myself, and no one likes that. But, I think what I need to understand is there is truly no good thing in me, so unless I am doing what is pleasing unto the Lord, I should feel bad about my behavior. Otherwise, I am elevating myself above the Lord Jesus. And, who in a kingdom elevates himself above the King. Oooh. Wow! Okay now. Lord, I hear You on that one!

With that established, it puts the rest of that verse into perspective for me. If I am surrounded by truth, then my heart will be protected, and I will be in right-standing with the Father. Because, Jesus is my truth; He is Who is in my heart; and, it’s only by Him that I can stand righteous before my Father in heaven.

Thank You, Lord God for the revelations You have poured forth in this section of the study. And, I pray Father Your Spirit will minister these revelations to my spirit and to the spirit of anyone else who happens to read this that we may know who we are in You and who we are in Christ, so we can “withstand in the evil day”. Lord God, I give all glory, honor, and praise to You, for You are truly an awesome God! In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART FIVE**

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

It's been awhile since I have dedicated this much time to studying the word, and I thank You Father for the purpose of my heart this morning and for the opportunity You have given me to do just that!

For me, I have established a few things I want to recap in my own mind before I go on to verse 15. First, I believe there are spiritual forces at work around us that help influence the way we behave. These spiritual forces play upon our own lusts and fleshly desires to draw us away from God and cause us to walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit. I also believe that to combat this problem, we must put on the whole armour of God, and once we have done that, we are to stand in the knowledge we have done all and then leave the rest to God. We must not be drawn into the things of the flesh by the wiles of the devil, but we must do as the scripture tells us: Submit to God; resist the devil (James 4:7). And, yes, I do know it is not always as easily done as it is said. I often find myself in that battle. But, I praise God, because at least now, I can recognize things I did not recognize before, and I have hope in Jesus and His life-changing power in me. So, let's get to the next verses to see what is revealed.

6:15 – Here we move to the feet and they are related to peace. Let's define a few words to get a clearer meaning:

“shod”: “to bind under one's feet, i.e. put on shoes or sandals:--bind on, (be) shod”

“gospel”: “a good message, i.e. the gospel:--gospel”

“peace”: “from a primitive verb [*which means*] (to join); peace (literally or figuratively); by implication prosperity:--one, peace, quietness, rest, + set at one again”

With the exception of the words defined, everything else was literal to its definition. Here, I find two things very interesting: the definition for “shod” and for “peace”. Now, I can relate to the

part about “put on shoes or sandals.” But, what got me was “to bind under one’s feet.” And, there are scriptures that talk about “all things being under Jesus’ feet”, but as I began to look at some of them, I decided not to go there today, but to stay focused on where I’m at. So, all I’m going to note here is there is something here we are told should be under our feet.

Now, I find the phrase “preparation of the gospel of peace” very intriguing. Why “preparation?” Why not just “gospel of peace?” But, before I try to answer that, because, there are some things stirring within me, I think I need to first say the “peace” defined here comes from a word that means “to join”. And, that’s what Jesus did. He made it possible for us to be joined back to the Father after the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

So, I began to wonder if this definition for peace was the only definition for peace, and I found it wasn’t. And, what I found very interesting is, from what I saw, I didn’t see any other word that implied the same thing as the original word translated “peace” in this passage. I guess the only way to explain it is this: what’s stirring within me is I have often looked at this peace as just that inner quietness I associate with being at peace. Those times when there is no turmoil in my life. But, what I see in this is two-fold. First, I believe we are seeing to be joined back to the Father by Jesus is the peace being brought out here. And, second, the only way to get that quietness within myself is to be at one with Jesus. If I am focused on Him, I am not focused on me, and that is where that quietness comes in, which takes me back to the phrase “preparation of the gospel of peace”.

How do you “prepare” the “gospel of peace?” Okay, we know the word “gospel” means a good message. So, what we have literally is “preparation of the good message of peace and by implication prosperity”. Yet, I am still having problems with the “preparation” part. And, I’m curious about the word “peace”. So, I looked them up in the Merriam Webster On-line dictionary, and this is what I found:

“preparation”: “**1** : the action or process of making something ready for use or service or of getting ready for some occasion, test, or duty”

“peace”: “**1** : a state of tranquillity or quiet: as **a** : freedom from civil disturbance  
**b** : a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom <a breach of the *peace*>  
**2** : freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions  
**3** : harmony in personal relations  
**4 a** : a state or period of mutual concord between governments **b** : a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity  
**5** -- used interjectionally to ask for silence or calm or as a greeting or farewell - **at peace** : in a state of concord or tranquillity”

So, what does this mean to me?

Well, it’s now 20 January 2003. As I was doing this study, I was interrupted and didn’t get a chance to finish it. But, I want to pick up right here, and move forward. So, what does this mean

to me? It's interesting that "harmony in personal relations" and "freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions" is a part of the dictionary definition for peace. That just takes me right back to where I was earlier in the study: we are reconciled (made at peace with the Father) through our relationship with the Son. And, we find inner peace by that very same relationship.

Now, I find myself right back at this question: How do you "prepare" the "gospel of peace"? Um. Okay, let's see if I can get what's inside out. Your feet represent your walk with God. And, they are to be bound with a good message. Oh, Lord, it seems You are telling us to "prepare", we must walk what we have confessed. That's our preparation! We must be prepared to put into action in our walk what we have confessed with our mouth. That's how you bind to your feet the gospel. You walk it out in your life!!!! Oooh. Um. I like that!

Okay, this is an excellent place to break and begin the next verse. Praise the name of Jesus!

# EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART SIX

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

We've finally made it to verse 16, so let's begin there:

6:16 – Here, it seems we are being told the shield of faith is the most important thing we can do in the process. “Above all, taking the shield of faith.” And, that makes logical sense for a few reasons. First, we are told by the scripture the shield is what we use “to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Second, if you don't have faith in Jesus, how on earth will you accept Him as Lord of your life and allow your life to be changed, so you can “walk out the gospel” in your lifestyle. And, third, without faith in Jesus, we have absolutely no defense against the “wicked” anyway. With that noted, let's define some of the words so we can get an even fuller meaning of what's being said. Here are the words that caught my attention:

“shield”: “a large shield (as door-shaped):--shield”

“faith”: “persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstract constancy in such profession; by extension the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself:--assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity”

“able”: “to be able or possible:--be able, can (do, + -not), could, may, might, be possible, be of power”

“quench”: “to extinguish (literally or figuratively):--go out, quench”

“fiery”: “to kindle, i.e. (passive) to be ignited, glow (literally), be refined (by implication), or (figuratively) to be inflamed (with anger, grief, lust):--burn, fiery, be on fire, try”

“darts”: “a missile, i.e. spear or arrow:--dart”

“wicked”: “hurtful, i.e. evil (probably in effect or influence ... figuratively. calamitous; also (passive) ill, i.e. diseased; but especially (morally) culpable, i.e. derelict, vicious, facinorous; neutral (singular) mischief, malice, or (plural) guilt; masculine (singular) the devil, or (plural) sinners:--bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked (-ness)”

Now, I can't say I truly understand all those definitions, but I do understand enough to know some things intrigue me. For example, the definition for “fiery” contains “be refined.” And, I do know the scriptures tell us our faith will be refined by fire and it will be tried.

(1 Peter 1:7 KJV) *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

(James 1:3 KJV) *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

Check this out. We are to take our shield of faith to quench (or put out) the “fiery darts of the wicked.” The interesting thing is our “shield” is “door-shaped”, and Jesus said, “*I am the door of the sheep*” (John 10:7 KJV). This is just too much. It seems to me we are being told here He is the door (our shield) that enables us to extinguish ALL the hurtful situations that come against us to try our faith (by fire), and please note this includes “anger, grief, lust.” Okay now. I guess I need to let that one absorb.

## EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART SEVEN

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

As they say in baseball, we're in the home stretch. But, before I go to verse 17, I want to look at something in verse 16 a little deeper.

6:16 – As previously noted, our faith is tried by fire, and what came to mind as I read over this again this morning, is the following scripture:

(1 Corinthians 3:12-15 KJV) <sup>12</sup>Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; <sup>13</sup>Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup>If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

And just to make it read a little easier, here's the NIV version:

(1 Corinthians 3:12-15 NIV) <sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup>If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

And, for me, this brings to mind the things we do during our Christian walk. What is our foundation we are building upon? Am I building upon a "Jesus" that will keep me out of hell, but can't change my earthly life? Or, am I building upon a "Jesus" that is LORD and that is SAVIOR and has the saving power to both raise me from the dead that I may live in eternity with the Father AND to change my life on this earth that my works will not be burned in the fire. I can hear ringing in my mind, "Only what you do for Christ counts." And, this proves that so very clearly. So, next time I find myself becoming "inflamed by anger, grief, or lust", I need to check myself and the work I am doing. I don't want to stand before the Lord one day with a

bunch of useless works I did. I want to do something that will glorify Him and ultimately the Father.

Please Lord, create in me a clean heart O' God and renew a right spirit within me that I may do the works You have set before me. I pray the next time I attempt to have a pity party or walk in a fleshly emotion or desire, I pray Lord God Your Spirit will arrest me right in my "steps" and bring this study back to my mind. I pray Lord God I will give You total dominion of my thoughts, my emotions, and the works I do in this body, that all I do will be a sweet-smelling savor to Your nostrils. Lord God, I want to please You, not myself, and I pray the spirit of selfishness that has had me bound for so many years will be broken off of me, in the name of Jesus. I give You all glory, honor, and praise Lord God. I lift Your name to the heavens and on the earth that all men may see that You live! Lord, teach me each day to love You and to worship You and You alone with all my heart, soul, and body. This I pray in Jesus name.

## EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART EIGHT

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...

Now that the Lord has convicted me of things I know are in my life that are not pleasing unto Him, it is time to seek His word on the remaining pieces of the armour: the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

6:17 – For some reason, I decided to look up the word “take”. I thought I would find it was the same word as in verse 13, but it’s not. And, as I look at it, it makes sense, because in verse 13, we are told to “take unto” us. But, here we are being told to “take”. And, those are two different mindsets. So, let’s define some things here:

“take”: “to receive (in various applications, literally or figuratively):--accept, receive, take”

“helmet”: “encirclement of the head, i.e. a helmet:--helmet”

“salvation”: “defender or (by implication) defence:--salvation”

“sword”: “a knife, i.e. dirk; figuratively war, judicial punishment:--sword”

“Spirit”: “a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze; by analogy or figuratively a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, daemon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit:--ghost, life, spirit (-ual, -ually), mind”

“word”: “an utterance (individual, collective or specific); by implication a matter or topic (especially of narration, command or dispute)”

“God”: “the supreme Divinity”

The first thing I’d like to note is the difference in the two “take” definitions, so I’m going to lay them side-by-side to get a clearer picture:

Verse 13: “take unto”: “analambano, an-al-am-ban'-o; ...to take up:--receive up, take (in, unto, up)”

Verse 17: “take”: “dechomai, dekh'-om-ahee; ...to receive (in various applications, literally or figuratively):--accept, receive, take”

The immediate difference I see is one seems more action oriented than the other. What I mean is in verse 13, there seems to be more action required on our part “to take up” something. What comes to mind is the action required for me to, let’s say, pick up a piece of paper off the table. I am taking that piece of paper into my hand. On the flip side, if my husband were to hand me a piece of paper, I must open my hand to receive from him what he is trying to give me. And, with that analogy in mind, I think of these two verses. We are to “take unto” us the armour of God, but we are to “take” the helmet of salvation. Um. How do I put this into words?

Okay, let’s see. We cannot do anything to gain salvation. It’s a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). But, just as I have to open my hand to “take” or receive the piece of paper from my husband, I have to open my mind (and my heart) to “take” or receive the gift of salvation. And, I find it most interesting “salvation” is defined as “defender”. I wasn’t expecting that. I was expecting something along the lines of “deliverance” or even “reconciliation”, but definitely not “defender”. So, I guess I am finding I really had no understanding of what I was accepting with the helmet of salvation. I am accepting Jesus as my defender. I don’t have to defend myself. He will do it for me. Oh, oh. Um. Here we go....helmet of salvation.

The helmet goes on the head, and protects the brain. Our thought process is what the enemy is after, and the only way to “defend” our thought process is to renew our mind (Romans 12:2), and the only way to do that is by the washing of the water by the word (Ephesians 5:26). Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God (Romans 10:17). And, eventually, we will get “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). But, we must not give up hope. We must allow Him to be our defender and to “circle our head.” Lord, give me the strength to walk in what You are revealing to me.

On the flip side, when it comes to the armour, there is action on our part. Just as I must take action to pick up the piece of paper off the table, I must take action to put on the whole armour. And, I believe the way you do that is to “*study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV). Otherwise, you will not have any word (and subsequently no Jesus) in you. Which takes us to the sword.

It is the word of God Jesus used to defend Himself and to defend us, because He is the Word of God. He is every spoken thought of our Divine Creator made flesh. He spoke not on His behalf, but for the Father (John 12:49-50), so we might know God’s will. By the written word of God, He cuts out of us things that would poison us, but we have to be willing to accept the truth of that word in our lives. Just because we have the written word imbedded in our minds, doesn’t mean it will change us. It’s that process of “rightly dividing the word of truth” that I believe is what changes us.

See, when you study the word and learn the truth of the word, it does something to your heart. And, you find yourself doing things that don't make sense by the world's standards. And, I think that's where I have such a hard time. Because not only do you have to have the written word, but you have to have the Spirit, and you have to allow Him to operate. I think that's why it's the "sword of the Spirit". One, only He can affect a change in a person, and two, only by Him can you truly know God's love...that unconditional love that causes you to give when the last thing you want to do is give...that causes you to forgive when the last thing you want to do is to forgive.

I know there is more in here than I am seeing right now, but I also know I am coming under heavy conviction. So, I think I'll pause here to let God do in my heart what He wills.

# EPHESIANS 6:10-18, PART NINE

(Ephesians 6:10-18 KJV) <sup>10</sup>*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. <sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; <sup>15</sup>And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: <sup>18</sup>Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;...*

Wow! This is it. We're in the final verse. So, let us begin:

6-18: As I first look at this, it almost seems as though this verse comes out of nowhere. But, as I think on this, I think we're being told here how to put on the armour. Since it's not something physical we can put on, it has to be something spiritual. And, how do you access spiritual things: by prayer. So, let's define some of these words:

“praying”: “to pray to God, i.e. supplicate, worship:--pray (X earnestly, for), make prayer”

“prayer”: “prayer (worship); by implication an oratory (chapel):--X pray earnestly, prayer”

“supplication”: “a petition:--prayer, request, supplication”

“watching”: “to be sleepless, i.e. keep awake:--watch”

“perserverance”: “persistency:--perseverance”

“saints”: “sacred (physical, pure, moral, blameless or religious, certainly consecrated):--(most) holy (one, thing), saint”

Okay, let's look at this verse with the definitions inserted: “(To pray to God; supplicate, worship) *always with all prayer* (worship) *and* (petition; request, supplication) *in the Spirit, and* (to be sleepless; watch[ing]) *thereunto with all* (persistency) *and* (petition; request) *for all the* (sacred; pure; moral; blameless; and consecrated).”

Hmm. The theme I see here is in our prayer, we are to worship God and to make requests, not just for us, but all those who are sacred. In other words, you put your armour on in prayer. And, what puts the armour on is a heart of worship for God. I think for me, I have a heart of worship

TO God, but not necessarily FOR God. What I mean by this is I can sing praises to Him and worship Him in music, because of who He is and all He has done in my life. But, I don't think I have a heart of worship FOR God, because if I did, I just don't think I'd do some of things I do. So, I got curious and looked up worship and sacred in the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary and here's what I found:

“worship”: “**1** : to honor or reverence as a divine being or supernatural power  
**2** : to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion”

“sacred”: “**1 a** : dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a deity <a tree *sacred* to the gods> **b** : devoted exclusively to one service or use (as of a person or purpose) <a fund *sacred* to charity>”

Now, unless I'm missing something here, we are to honor God and be devoted to Him, so much so we are dedicated and set aside for serving Him. Does this mean we can't function in our every day lives? No, I don't think so. I personally think that would go against what Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8 – that we be witnesses unto Him. And, I don't think you can be a witness to the world, unless you have some interaction with them. But, I also know we are not supposed to conform ourselves to this world, but we're to transform ourselves by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

I find myself back at “preparation of the gospel of peace”, which I now believe is how we walk out our belief in Jesus in our lives. He is that bridge between us and the Father, for without Him, no man can come to the Father (John 14:6). But, if we profess Him as Lord of our lives, yet our walk does not allow Him that Lordship, do we really have on the armour? Are we really saved? Because, do we really believe in Him? That's something I believe I need to truly ponder in my heart. I know we have a sin nature, and there are times when we get caught unawares by the enemy. And, I think that's why we're told here in verse 18 “to be sleepless”. Not in the sense of physical sleep, but I think this is talking about in the sense of spiritual wakefulness, which, I believe is why we are told “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*”

What's on our minds during the day? Do we have a heart of worship focused on God, or are we entertaining thoughts from the enemy? Do we pray to our Father throughout the day, or do we confine Him to a specific time slot when we let Him know our requests? I don't think the “*praying always*” is talking about dedicated time that we pray to Him, but I believe it's talking about just including Him in our everyday lives and having a heart of worship towards Him in all we do. You can worship God anywhere just by having a grateful heart and a smile on your face. Think of how the world would change if we all had a heart of worship towards our Father in heaven. We wouldn't be self-centered. Road-rage wouldn't exist. We wouldn't get mad at the person behind the counter, because we think he or she is taking too long. And, we wouldn't be so dogged about protecting our spot in the grocery line. Father, help me to have a heart of worship towards You in all I do. In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN – HOW WILL I APPROACH MY KING?**

**ESTHER 2:12**

(Esther 2:12 KJV) *Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)...*

Awhile back, this phrase became near and dear to my heart. I was attempting to earn extra money (and validate my purpose in life) by working as a beauty consultant. Well, being the tomboy I am, that was sort of an oxymoron in the first place, but in the process I met some wonderful people. I even learned some really valuable life lessons. God can truly turn anything to good! Well, I am now working at something I am more equipped to do (an administrative assistant), but this phrase is still very near and dear to me, because this is how I see our relationship with Jesus, and for those of us who are married, with our husbands.

Without breaking anything down, this verse speaks to me of how we are to prepare ourselves for the kings in our life. First, when we accept Jesus as Lord, we should also view Him as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:6). I believe when we do that, it is so much easier to accept His Lordship in our life. If we can picture Him as a King, and us as servants in His Kingdom, it's easier to submit our will to His. But, as I have heard it preached, we try to apply democratic principles to the Kingdom of God, and it just doesn't work. You just cannot operate in the Kingdom of God on democratic principles. I believe that's why we try to reason our way through things, and why we have such a hard time taking God at His word. I believe it's also one of the things that help tradition make the word of God of no effect (Matthew 15:16). We get caught up in what we hear, but we don't take the time to find out for ourselves what the King said Himself. Sadly enough, for years, I could quote what the King said, but surely was not obeying Him, but doing my own thing.

This scripture in Esther speaks to my heart that, just as Esther took a year to prepare herself for her King, we need to take time to prepare ourselves for ours. How do we do that? As women in general, we learn and do what the scriptures say about how to be women at an early age, so that our husband can find a wife, for he who finds a wife finds a good thing (Proverbs 18:22). But, as women, we expect to, one, find a husband, which is not biblical, and two, to not be ready to be a wife, but receive the blessings of a wife. Trust me, it don't happen like that. Yes, I said "don't," because I have spent the first seven years of marriage learning to be a wife. If I had done it early on, my husband and I would not have suffered much of what we suffered over the past seven and a half years.

If we take a look at it from a biblical perspective of our relationship with Jesus, I know there is nothing we can do to prepare FOR Him, but once we come TO Him, there is much we can do to prepare ourselves for how we represent Him as His bride. We can take the time to study to show ourselves approved (2 Timothy 3:15), as He has commanded us to do. We can learn to renew our minds as commanded (Romans 12:2), and we can learn to desire God's will over ours as Jesus did (Matthew 26:42). Doing those things prepare us for our King, because then, and only

then, are we really ready to be His servants. Before that, we are just subjects of His Kingdom - not willing to serve, but expecting to receive the King's blessings. Wow! Thank You Lord for that revelation. I give You all glory, honor, and praise.

Now, what I'd like to know is what this scripture means from a biblical viewpoint, so I'd like to take a moment and look at some really key words. So, here are the definitions:

“Purification” – “rubbing (with perfumery)”

“Myrrh” - “as distilling in drops, and also as bitter”

“Sweet Odour” – “fragrance; by implication spicery; also the balsam plant”

Now, that I find most interesting. The bitter part of the purification (myrrh) comes before the fragrance (sweet odour). That is so very true in my life. The bitter always comes before the sweet. Believe me, my life (up until now) has been mostly bitter. The only sweetness I ever tasted was when I would accomplish something at school or work and feel important. But, deep down I was still empty. Even now, after all the studies I've done and all the things I've learned, I still feel empty at times. There is such a longing in me for Jesus, and yet, I just don't know how to satisfy it. It's like when you have a taste for something to eat, but you don't know what it is. I know, for me, I tend to eat everything in sight looking for that one specific taste. I have done much the same thing with Jesus. I have tried volunteer work, working part-time, and even singing in the choir, but I am still longing for that something special to satisfy the taste within. Of all I've done, choir has been the closest, because it gives me an avenue to pour out to Him some of what is within me. Yet, I still don't know what it is, but I do believe God is preparing me for it. I do know He has helped me truly begin to overcome the darkness in my mind and to rest in Him (His word). So, I guess the reason this verse is so dear to my heart is because I am preparing myself for my King. I am preparing myself to serve my King, and when it's my season (just as with Esther) I will be called for such a time as this (4:14).

10 January 2004

Father, this was a most blessed day, and I truly thank You from the very depths of my heart. This time, two years ago, you were teaching me about choices. It began November 9, 2001, when I wasn't allowed to leave the military even though my term of service had expired. But, because of the 9/11 attacks, many were held against their will. For some, it wasn't an issue. For me, it was, because as I've said before, having my freedom of choice taken away really did something to my heart, because even You allow us the freedom to choose.

*(Deuteronomy 30:19 KJV) I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:...*

Even though God tells us to choose, He doesn't tell us what we will choose. So, the ultimate decision rests in our hands. Granted, we understand the consequences of our choice. If we choose life, we choose blessings. If we choose death, we choose cursing. Nevertheless, we still have the option to choose. And, we do that every day. So, for me, to have my choice of staying in the military taken away from me was very devastating. And, even though I have talked about this in my journal before, I didn't understand just how much or why.

Well, today, I went to Women's Discipleship at church, and the title of the sermon was "Choosing to Win." It was a truly inspired and blessed word from the Lord, and it brought me back full circle. What God began over two years ago, He brought full circle today. It started before I got out of the military. It was confirmed at a seminar I went to in August of 2002. I have been speaking that very thing every since and using that spoken word to help guide my decisions. Now, in January of 2004, God has truly spoken through the mouth of yet another witness how important my power to choose really is. I hear it often from Joyce Meyer, and God has confirmed it, yet again, today through Pastor Colleen. I thank You Lord for that word. I thank You for the deliverance I have received in my life over the past 26 months. You have truly broken the chains of darkness off my mind by Your word. And, because of the impact, I want to capture Pastor Colleen's teaching today on how to win by changing our attitude. There is so much more to this message than the excerpt attached, but even that nugget has the power to really set people free, because it is these principles that have brought me out of the darkness and into the light. It is these principles that have helped me begin overcoming the fits of rage I have suffered. It is these principles that rise to my mind to combat the anger and rage that lead to destructive behavior, including self-inflicted pain to try to ease the devastating emotional hurt I have felt.

However, while I have lived these principles to be made free, I cannot think of a better way to express them than Pastor Colleen has. So, in giving honor to God as the author and Pastor Colleen as the oracle, here is the summation of how each of us can have victory in our own personal spiritual journey.

**HOW TO CHOOSE TO WIN  
(BY A CHANGE IN YOUR ATTITUDE)**

- A – Acknowledge that life has difficulties
- T – Train your mind to think the Father's thoughts
- T – Tell yourself and others the good news
- I – Inventory the good in your life
- T – Treasure your will to choose and use it wisely
- U – Understand what is most important is what is taking place on the inside and not on the outside
- D – Decide to keep your joy
- E – Express your thanks, continually

Pastor Colleen Rouse  
Women's Discipleship  
January 10, 2004

## CONCLUSION

I come to You Father, in the name of Jesus, thanking You for all the principles You have taught me in these writings. I thank You Father, for helping me to learn to walk in these principles on a more consistent basis. I thank You, Father, for the tremendous breakthrough in my life over anger based on these principles. I give You all glory, honor, and praise in my life, and I thank You for loving me. I thank You for Your word and for the power it has to change our lives. And, I pray that any who read these writings of mine will discover the power of Your word and the power of their individual choice to obey Your word.

To all who may read these writings, I pray for the Holy Spirit to affect a change in your spirit and your soul through the things I believe He has revealed. I know the word of God works when we choose to obey it. When I began this journey (in earnest) in 1999, I was one month shy of having been saved 13 years, without one single fruit in my life to show for it. And, while I'm not where I'm going, I am not where I was, but my life has truly changed by the power of God's word, His Holy Spirit, and the grace He has given me to choose to obey His word. I pray each of you will choose to do the same.

I don't think I will ever forget that day in Germany when it all began. My husband and I were having this huge argument about something. I have no idea about what and don't even remember what he said, but I do remember my response very clearly: "I choose to be angry!" To which he replied, "That's right. You do." I heard my statement right after it came out of my mouth, and I was totally astonished by it. Not to mention, a little annoyed at his response, because I was conditioned to the "I-can't-help-it" mentality. So, that statement was a serious revelation for me, but God had to take that revelation and apply His word to it. He had to teach me the principles that go along with that revelation. And, in closing, I would like to summarize the process that helped me to overcome my anger.

First, I had to acknowledge what I was dealing with and stop making excuses for it. I had to understand my anger was wrong, and it was hurting others, especially those close to me. Over the years, there were times when I learned to repress it, but that was not the solution. And, to find the solution, I had to go to the next step.

Second, I had to learn what was triggering my anger. I had to discover the root cause, because until I pulled it up by the root, it would keep coming back. For me, it was rejection. So, I learned to stop blaming others and recognize the problem lied within me. That was the only way I could learn to recognize the triggers the enemy was using to get me angry. But, even after I learned what was causing me to react, I was still powerless to overcome it in my own strength, which takes me to my next step.

Third, I fasted and prayed and by God's Spirit, cast the spirit of anger out of my life. Some things only come out by fasting and praying, and this was a lifelong demon I was dealing with. However, while I truly believe deliverance took place, there was more, because I would still throw a fit, maybe not as often, but they were still there! But, there was such a difference in 1) how I felt during the fit, and 2) the repentance I felt after the fit. I had changed on the inside, but

the fits were still making their way to the outside. I didn't understand it. Thank God for bringing clarity in the next step.

Fourth, I had to break the stronghold. See, we know the bible tells us, we can sweep the house clean, but if we don't fill it with something of God, that spirit will come back with seven worse than itself. That's where the stronghold comes in. The spirit that resided in me had created a stronghold, a behavior pattern that had become ingrained in my soul, that place where I make my decisions. So, while the spirit was gone, the stronghold was still there. THAT'S WHY I was still reacting the same even though I didn't feel the same. And, what God showed me (through the revelation of a friend) was that I had not asked Him for something to fill that void that was left when the spirit of anger departed. So, I asked Him for His love. And, He poured it out on me. He reminded me to overcome evil with good. So, I began to replace negative thoughts with positive ones, and anger with good deeds. I made that great exchange in the decision of my soul. So, the fourth step was to exchange the things of the world for the things of God to break the stronghold.

And, last, but not least, the final step for me is consistency. That's where I'm and where I will remain. I will continually be tested in this area. That's why I believe we are taught the devil is like a roaring lion roaming about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). And, I believe this portion of the process is to embed the word of God (the exchange I made) deeper and deeper into my soul, so when the spirit of anger tries to come back, it will find my spirit AND my soul filled with the things of God. It takes more than one right decision to break a stronghold. It takes a series of consistent decisions. But, what I had to understand is I can still move ahead even when I feel like circumstances and situations are trying to hold me back. During those times, I seek to focus more on the choices I make than the circumstance or the situation, because my soul is like a container. Each time I make the right decision, I pour more of the things of God in that container, and we know that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45). But, each time I make a bad decision, I slow down the process of my cup overflowing. However, God is good, and I know when I ask, He always grants forgiveness.

So, again, I give God all the glory, honor, and praise for what He has done in my life. And, before I go, I would like to give every person who reads these writings an opportunity to choose. If you have never accepted Jesus in your life, or if you just need to make a fresh commitment to Him today, please, take time to pray this prayer with me.

Father, I come to You in the name of Jesus asking You to come into my life and take over my mind, my heart, and my soul. I admit I am a sinner, and there is no other way to salvation and eternal life with You, except by the name of Jesus. Father, I believe in my heart You raised Jesus from the dead, and I accept Him as Lord and as Savior of my life. I turn away from my sins, and I ask that You create a new heart in me, one that will not only receive Your love, but also share it with others. I give my life to You, Lord God, and ask You to fill me now with Your Holy Spirit, so He may lead and guide me in everything I say and do. I love You, Lord God, and I thank You for accepting me into Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Welcome to the family, because you are now my sister or my brother in Christ. Whether you prayed that prayer for the first time, rededicated your life to Christ, or just haven't been in the fellowship of other believers, I pray you will ask God to lead you to a church home that will help you grow in your relationship with the Lord Jesus. If He's already done that, I pray you will choose to return where He has planted you, so you can become rooted and grounded in your Lord and Savior. I pray you will take time in your life to get to truly know the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, for He is truly an awesome God!

May God's blessings and His peace abound in the life of every person who reads these writings. In closing, I ask O' Lord, give melody to these last words of my heart. Let the music of heaven grace the heart of each reader and the touch of Your Spirit grace their life as they read them.

## **WE SHALL OVERCOME**

We shall overcome  
We shall overcome  
We shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb

One day back at Calvary Jesus made a choice  
He gave  
His life  
To redeem the lives  
Of those who were lost  
To Sin

We shall overcome  
We shall overcome  
We shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb

So don't  
Stay lost  
In the mirk and the mire  
The enemy  
Has tempted you with

'Cause Jesus blood  
Has washed you clean  
And made you free from sin

Yes, we have overcome  
We have overcome  
We have overcome by the blood of the Lamb

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