

Audio Review

TOPICAL MEMORY SYSTEM COMMENTARY



Personalized
CHRISTIAN LIFE
Studies

by LEROY EIMS

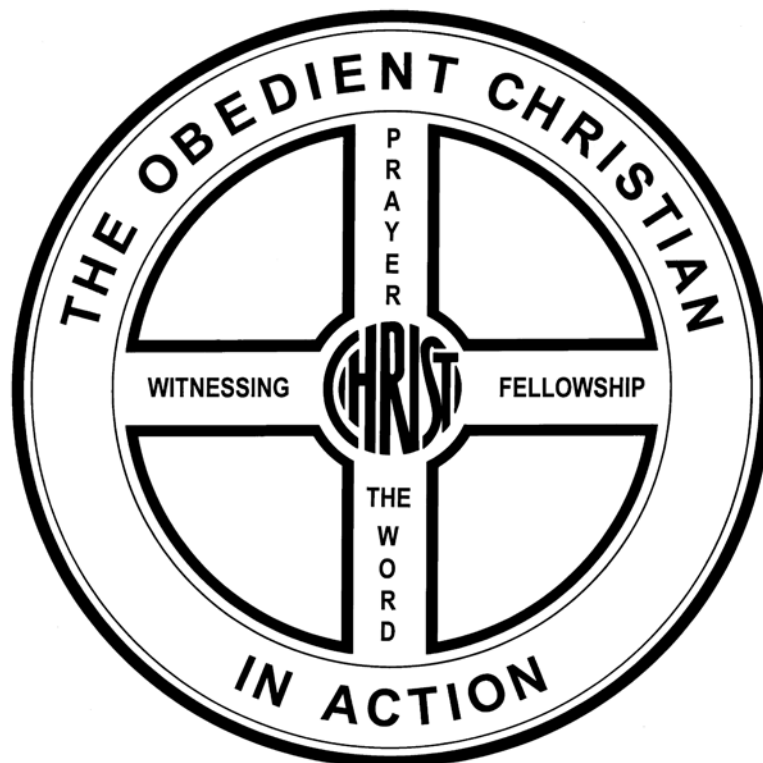
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Living the New Life

Christ the Center - “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

Life in Christ is completely new and the presence of the Lord Jesus in our lives gives us a completely new dimension. Our old worldly and self-centered ambitions, outlook on life, and moral values are changed as we come to know Him personally and as His power becomes operative daily in our lives.



The verse begins with “therefore” and whenever you see a “therefore” in a verse you must try to understand what it is there for, so you can properly understand the meaning. Here Paul is referring back to the previous verses that taught some powerful and dramatic truths.

He taught that you and I who belong to Jesus must not live for self, but for “Him who died for us and rose again.” Then he goes on to remind us that our outlook on life should not be from a purely human point of view. Of course not! We are now children of the living God and we see things from the perspective of heaven.

This vital Bible verse goes on to show the universality of the claims of Christ. He speaks of “any man.” There is not a person alive who is not welcome in the kingdom of God. There are

organizations, clubs, fraternities and sororities that some of us could not get into. But we are all welcome “in Christ.”

Jesus said: “all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Note that you and I are “in Christ.” Paul had told the Ephesians: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-6).

What does it mean to be “in Christ?” It means that when we have repented of sin and turned, by faith, to the Lord Jesus and are trusting Him and Him alone for our salvation, we actually become part of Christ's body in the earth. We are members of the Body of Christ. Therefore you and I have brothers and sisters whom we have never seen, and in spite of the fact that they may be living thousands of miles from us, we are actually joined to them in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

He goes on to tell us that when we are in Christ we are new. We are a new creation. Just as God created the world by the word of His power, so you and I have become a new race of people in this world; people who walk in newness of life in the midst of multitudes who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Because of that old things, old ways, old habits, old desires, old sins, have passed away and all things have become new. Of course they have! We are new because of our new life in Christ. We have a new name written in Heaven, a new heart, and a new nature. We live by new rules, with new goals and objectives in the new company of our fellow believers in Christ.

Christ the Center - “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Not only are we in Christ, but He lives in us. Paul told the Colossians that this is “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26-27). He prayed for the Ephesians “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

These verses and others reveal the closeness of the relationship that we enjoy with our sovereign Lord. Stop and think for a moment just how amazing that is. How many people are really close to the Queen of England or the King of Denmark?

You and I can meet with the Lord Jesus day by day as He speaks to us through His word and we speak to Him in prayer. He told us, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Paul knew by experience that justification could not be attained by works of the law. He had tried it; he had gone that route and knew by experience that no one could perform perfect obedience to it. He knew that there was no more need for the sacrifices and purifications of the ceremonial law.

They had all been fulfilled in Jesus Christ and had come to an end when Christ offered Himself a sacrifice for us. He was dead to the Law so that he might live unto God.

In this verse He gives us an excellent description of the mysterious life of the child of God. He is crucified and yet he lives. Later in this book he goes on to say, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

He lives and yet not he. That's a strange statement: "I live and yet not I." Actually he had never been more alive because now he is totally alive; physically and spiritually. But he knows that he lives by the grace and mercy of God. He has all the comfort and power of the manifold grace of God active in his life. Yet he knows that it is nothing of his own doing.

He saw himself in a state of constant dependence on the Lord. Christian, never forget that. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (II Corinthians 3:5).

We live in the flesh, and to all outward appearances we live just like other people do. Though we live in the flesh, we do not live after the flesh.

Those of us who have placed our faith in Christ live by that faith; a deep, abiding trust in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. What greater evidence of the love of Christ than the fact that He willingly died for us that we might live!

As believers we are identified with Christ in His death and in His resurrected life. By faith we rely on Him to live His life in and through us.

Obedience to Christ - "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

This is one of the clearest and most forceful verses in the Bible regarding our personal duty to God. You and I are to surrender ourselves to God. We are to give ourselves to the Lord by an act of the will. Paul taught the Corinthians that the body is for the Lord. But notice the gentle and tender urging of this great apostle. Because of his great position in the work of Christ, he could have demanded. But his word to the believers was: "I beseech you." Paul knew that people are more easily led, than driven.

You remember in the Old Testament, the offering was presented by the person who was seeking the blessing of God. He transferred to God all his right and title to the thing offered on the altar.

Peter gives us some insight into the New Testament application of all this: “You and I as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (I Peter 2:5).

We are the temple of God: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Corinthians 6:19, 20). We are priests unto God.

In the Revelation through St. John, God spoke these words: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (6) and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 1:5, 6).

We are the sacrifice. A living sacrifice, a free-will offering as we yield ourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Paul further calls for a sacrifice that is holy. You and I must so order our lives that day by day we give to God a life that pleases Him. We must not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin and uncleanness. He had told them earlier that although in the past they had yielded their members as servants to uncleanness and iniquity, even so now they were to yield their members as servants of righteousness unto holiness. With the same zeal that they had yielded themselves to sin and self in the past, even so now they were to wholeheartedly yield themselves unto God.

This is a much needed word today. Our eyes and ears are exposed to a constant barrage of sin and corruption from the entertainment world. Let us guard our lives that we may present to God a holy sacrifice day by day. In that way we will have the confidence that through the mercy of God our sacrifice will be acceptable to the Almighty, Righteous and Holy God. This is the reasonable and spiritual service that God calls upon us to give. May God give us grace to follow His call.

Obedience to Christ - “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

The Christian life is not all that complicated. In this vital Bible verse Jesus lays out for us two plain and simple thoughts: those of us who have the commandments of Christ should keep them. Now, that makes sense doesn't it?

What is the use of having and knowing the Word of Christ if we ignore it, live contrary to it, and willingly disobey it? Jesus said that obedience to His Word is the proof of our love for Him. Most of us have taken care of the first part of this thought. We all have Bibles. In fact, we

usually have a number of Bibles in our homes: the King James, the New American Standard, the Amplified, and so on.

We have the commands of God. But the critical issue is: do we obey them? Do we pattern our lives after the Scriptures?

Two problems can arise. One, we can have the scriptures in our homes but they can be left on the shelves un-opened. One man said that if everyone in America who owned a Bible would blow on the cover at the same time, it would create the biggest dust storm ever experienced in the U.S. Maybe so! We know that can happen - to neglect the Word of God - not read it, study it, memorize it.

But a second problem can arise. We can be one of those who learn the commandments of God in vain. How is that possible? Simple. To have them and not keep them.

Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). To have the commands of Christ in our heads is one thing. To know them is all important. To keep them is imperative.

What a blessing to be identified with that great band of men and women around the world who truly love the Lord Jesus. And who are they? Not those who have the greatest intellect to explain the deep mysteries of God; not those with the greatest power of persuasion and ability to speak with force and clarity; not those who have the greatest wealth and thus are able to give great sums of money to advance the work of the Kingdom; but simply those who keep His Word.

Jesus said, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you" (John 15:10, 14).

This is not to say that those with great intelligence, speaking ability or wealth cannot be among those who love and obey the Lord. Of course they can. What it does say is that there is no substitute for obedience.

This vital Bible verse then states the blessings that follow a life of obedience. He who loves Christ will be loved by the Father. God so loves His Son that He showers grace upon them who love Him also. Then Jesus said that He will love us too. In the nature of God, nothing shines more brightly than the fact that God is love; unless it is the fact that God loves us.

The next blessing that follows is the promise of the personal manifestation of Christ to our hearts and lives. He gives us grace to understand something of the dimensions of His eternal love for us.

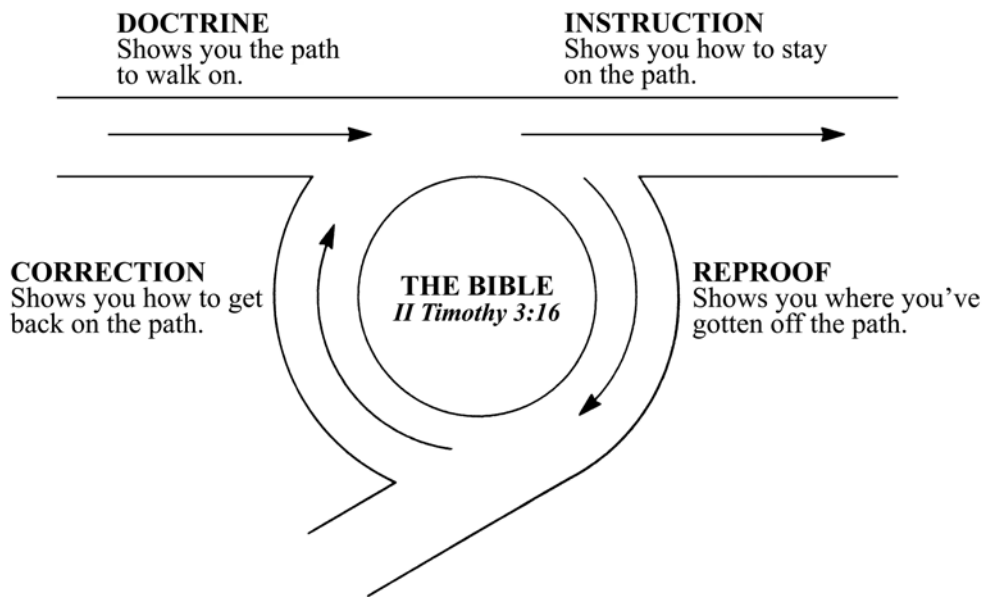
Christ does not manifest Himself in all His fullness to the wayward and disobedient. Why? Because their ears are tuned to a different voice and their feet are turned to a different path. Let me urge you to take this matter seriously. Learn the Word of God and keep it.

The Word - “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16).

This verse is set in a most interesting context. Paul had warned Timothy that it was not enough just to learn the truth, but it was vital that he continue in it. Jesus had taught the same thing. “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32).

Time and again Paul warned the believers that the narrow path was alive with dangers that were real and deadly.

What is the road map that will show us the way? What is the light and the lamp to guide us when the days grow dark? Here Paul leaves no doubt. It is the Holy Scriptures, the sum total of divine revelation.



The grand design of the Bible is given in verse 15: “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15).

The Apostle John had revealed to us the great purpose of the Gospel: “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

What then? After we have begun our walk on the path of righteousness, in what specific ways will the Bible prove helpful? Thank God, it will provide all the direction we need. Peter said, “By which are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Peter 1:4).

So, in this vital Bible verse we learn two great truths regarding the Scriptures. They are inspired of God and are profitable to the people of God. And then He spells it out: the scriptures are profitable in four specific ways.

First of all, it instructs us in that which is true. Think of that! In a world filled with falsehood and error, you and I have the truth. I have always been struck by the reference to the Word of God in the letter the king wrote to Ezra the scribe. He referred to the Scriptures as “the wisdom of God that is in thine hand.”

He goes on to say that it is given for our reproof, to warn us when we go wrong. This is one of the greatest blessings of Scripture memory. It provides us with an internal guidance system which the Blessed Holy Spirit of God uses to alert us when we head in the wrong direction.

Solomon instructed us to bind them continually upon our hearts. The result? “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the ways of life” (Proverbs 6:22, 23).

Thus the Word of God is both an early warning device and it is also the means by which we are restored to the right path. In light of all that, who among us can afford to leave the Word of God un-opened?

We all need to be instructed, corrected, and reprovved. Only in the Bible can we find that which instructs us in truth, reprovves us for that which is amiss, and directs us in that which is good.

The Word - Joshua 1:8

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

There are two positive things that the Lord told Joshua in this verse and one negative thing. He gave the negative first. The Word of God was not to depart from his mouth. Whatever orders he gave to the people as the general of the army and whatever decisions he made as the leader of the people, his every day affairs of life must be consistent with the Word of God. Think of it!

These people were a people most blessed. They were led by a man who was to base his life upon the Scriptures.

In every age this is the crying need. The world condition today reflects the fact that the leaders in government, business and education by and large pay little attention to the Bible. What a tragedy!

This people, however, had been reminded by Moses of the greatness of their blessing from God. It had set them apart from all others.

He had taught them the Word of God and then charged them: “keep, therefore, and do it.” Joshua was to live his life and pattern his leadership by these statutes of God.

Two things were necessary in order to do that. One, he was to meditate day and night on the Word. The word meditate means to ponder. It has the idea of talking it over with yourself, to think it through. In my own life I have found that one of the greatest aids to meditation is Scripture memory.

Now, I suppose I'm speaking to some of you who think you have a poor memory. Actually your memory is good. What is your address? You know it, don't you? What's your phone number? How many people can you call by name? A good memory is a skill that can be improved. It is not something you either have or don't have. Attitude makes the difference.

But don't rely on the frailty of your own human limitations. Count on God to help you. Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me.”

Here are a few tips: when learning or reviewing a verse, quote it word-perfect. Make the first impression on your mind clear and correct. Mistakes once learned, are difficult to unlearn.

There are two times during the day that are most conducive to learning. One is just before bedtime. While you're asleep you forget less. The other is right after you get up. Your mind is most receptive to new impressions. Review during your spare moments.

Make sure you read the context. Read the verse several times, repeat the reference with the verse and if need be, write it out. All of this will stimulate meditation.

Then obey what you have learned. To the person who will do this, God makes a promise: “for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Prayer - John 15:7

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

It is interesting to note that this vital Bible verse, this statement from the Lord Himself, begins with the word “if.” It is possible to be a Christian and not be abiding in Christ. It is possible to be a Christian and not have His Word abiding in you. It is possible to be a lukewarm, half-hearted, un-disciplined Christian who follows Christ, but follows afar off.

Now, you don't want to be that sort of Christian, do you? Of course not. Especially when you know that sort of Christian misses the adventures of the abundant life; the fulfillment of a fruitful life and satisfaction of a joyful life, and the peace of an obedient life. Well, since you don't want to miss the fullness of fellowship, what do you do?

This verse contains some basic and simple truth that anyone can learn and apply. He says: “if ye abide in me.” To abide means to stay firm and steady in our relationship with Him. In simple language it means to base your life on His promises. It means letting Him lead you by His Spirit and acknowledge your dependence upon Him.

You can do this through daily prayer, you can also do this by trusting Him to cleanse you from pride, rebellion, bitterness, fear, doubt, anger, and all of those things that weaken your Christian life, and make you spiritually sick. We all need to keep the glory of God in the forefront of our hearts and minds.

Someone says, “Did you say that was easy?” No. Of course I didn't say that sort of lifestyle was easy. What I said was, it is simple. Christ Himself will give you the strength and power to do it.

It is up to you to desire it, to want it. The whole matter pivots on the one word, “if.” He says, “Will you?” What is the basic desire of your heart? What is the alternative to a life lived in intimate union and loving obedience to Christ? The answer to that is obvious.

Look around. You become just one more person following one more shopping cart through one more supermarket. Is that what you want your life to be? Of course not.

As we look further into this vital Bible verse we see one more condition: “If my words abide in you.” Now you can do something about that. Tomorrow morning you can sit down with your Bible, open it, and let Christ speak to your heart.

The context of this verse pictures Christ as the vine and we as the branches. As we maintain our strong union with Christ through obedience, His life flows through us, through His Word. He said: “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”

Then follows the staggering promise: “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” The promises that live in us, that are stored in our hearts, lie ready to be turned into life-changing prayers. Prayers that have the power of the will of God at their root.

Prayer - Philippians 4:6-7

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Now there's a challenge. To be careful, that is to be full of anxious care over nothing. Is that possible? Well, look at the context.

There was an equally stiff challenge given in verse 4: “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). Rejoice at all times, in all circumstances, under all conditions. Then he gives the challenge to patiently bear any affliction and to enjoy the good times of life in a steady, tranquil spirit. Why?

Because the Lord is at hand; He is with us, nearer than our closest friend. The lifestyle of Jesus did not have those violent ups and downs that can often characterize our daily walk. He left us an example; he moved through life manifesting neither abject despair when things went wrong, nor giddy light-heartedness when things went well.

So the call to rejoice has its origin and termination in God. Then he says in light of all of that, be full of anxious care over nothing.

Jesus had taught the same thing on an earlier occasion: “Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Therefore, take no thought saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink? or, with what shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:25-34).

There are two kinds of care. One is the care of wise planning and prudence. The other is the care of distrust which only leads to a burdened heart and sorrowful spirit. He then goes on to show us how to live above it. “In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God.”

As an antidote to worry he prescribes a lifestyle of constant prayer. I am a firm believer in having stated times of prayer, but here is the exhortation to pray when things burden our spirit; to pray when we need direction and strength. Naturally we must mix thanksgiving with our supplications as a bold statement to God that we believe the answer is on the way.

What is the result of it all? “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” God wants to infuse our troubled lives with His peace. He wants to surprise our troubled hearts with a blessed transfusion of peace.

When that happens, others who know your situation and circumstance will not understand how you can be a peace in the midst of tumult. You may not understand it yourself. That's why it is called the peace that passes understanding.

Fellowship - Matthew 18:20

“For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Jesus assumed that His followers would gather together for regular fellowship in His name. I'm sure He would have been surprised by the notions of some modern believers who speak of worshipping God in nature at the beach or in the mountains, on the golf course or tennis courts while they neglect the assembling together in the life of the church. But for the faithful who gather for fellowship, He makes a blessed promise: He is in their midst.

What is the purpose of this fellowship? Actually, there are quite a few reasons to gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus. The context of this vital Bible verse gives us one of them: “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father, who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:19).

There are many places in Scripture where we are promised answers to the prayer of faith. But here we have particular encouragement to joint prayer. When believers meet by appointment together at the throne of grace to pray about some special need or activity, they are assured of His answer.

It is interesting to note that the Lord spoke specifically here of a small gathering in His name. Too often we evaluate the success or failure of a church meeting by the number of people present. If you ask a person: “How was the meeting?” He or she is likely to answer, “Oh, it was a great meeting. The place was packed out!” It is assumed that if a large group shows up, the meeting will be a success. But if few people come, the meeting will border on failure. We must remember that it is not numbers that determine the effectiveness of Christian fellowship. It is the faith and devotion of those present.

We can gather for any number of reasons. We can meet together to grow in our knowledge of Christ. We can meet to advance the work of Christ or to be equipped in our service for Christ. But the point is this: the Christian who desires to be obedient to the Lord Jesus will actively seek the fellowship of other believers whether personally, or in small prayer and Bible study groups, or in the corporate worship of the whole assembly.

We are members of one body, the body of Christ. As such we are dependent upon each other. We need the mutual encouragement, admonition, and sharpening of our lives that Christian fellowship uniquely offers.

When the church was born, they saw it as essential. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Fellowship depends on relationships. Keep the lines clear between yourself and your brother in the Lord. Jesus was quite insistent on this point. “Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). Forgiveness, reconciliation, patience and love are vital ingredients of true Christ-centered fellowship.

Fellowship - Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 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 10:24-25).

There is a tendency in each of us to stray from the path, to grow cold in heart and spirit, to become enamored by those things that dampen our fervor and affection for Christ. One of the antidotes for error and apostasy is the loving concern of fellow believers.

Done in the right way, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, this can be a powerful means of helping each other stay on the right track. But there are problems. All too often if a brother comes to me and gives me a word of admonition, warning, or advice, my first tendency is to bristle.

I say to myself, "Who does he think he is? He's not perfect. What right does he have to talk to me like that?" So, for this vital Bible verse to be effective in our lives, the first thing we need is a spirit of humility.

The other problem of course, is on the opposite side of the coin. If I go to a brother with a prideful, overbearing attitude, giving the impression of a know-it-all, I am most likely to be resisted and rebuffed.

Therefore, humility (the queen of virtues) once again proves to be the central need for true Christian ministry, growth and fellowship. If a humble, loving person goes to another humble and loving person with a word of exhortation or advice, there will be eternal work done by the Holy Spirit of God.

But if a high-minded, haughty person goes to another high-minded, haughty individual with a word of exhortation or advice, the sparks will fly, the fellowship will be shattered, and the devil will have gained another victory. The person will not be provoked to love and good works, but to anger.

Frankly, I have found that a good example is one of the best and most effective means of prompting love and good works in others. Our words may provoke a retaliation, but our example is likely to challenge another to greater love and service for Christ.

It seems that even during the Apostles' times, there were those who neglected the fellowship of believers. They were failing to gather for the worship of God and the mutual edification that always results. So the writer encourages them to join heart and hand; to not forsake the assembling of themselves together. Our faith and obedience can be stimulated by fellowship with other believers, as theirs can by fellowship with us.

For some time I worked in a bakery. Often we would receive orders for chocolate donuts. I would take great chunks of chocolate and put them in a large pan. Then I would heat it gradually and soon the chunks of chocolate would begin to melt and merge with each other.

This is a picture of church fellowship. We can be like chunks of chocolate; all gathered together in the same church, but true fellowship begins when the Spirit of God warms our hearts and we become one.

Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

Witnessing - Matthew 4:19

"And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

The first thing that Jesus did when He entered into His public ministry in Galilee was to preach and call people to repent. His second act was to band together a few men who would do likewise. We are told: "He ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14).

Galilee was a remote part of the nation and those who lived there were less cultured and refined than those who served in Herod's court or among the Pharisees of Jerusalem. They had sort of a broad, country accent and were easily identified in Jerusalem. Their speech betrayed them.

Jesus was walking near the sea one day and saw two fishermen casting their nets into the sea. In that setting to those two unlikely men, rough hewn, un-educated working men he threw out a challenge that still rings through the corridors of time. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

Try to imagine their reaction. Were they startled? Surprised? Frightened? Overjoyed? What if the Lord Jesus were to come to you today with the same challenge. What would your reaction be? Would you begin to make excuse? Why me, Lord! I am not well educated. I am not cultured and refined. I am a plain person, I work for a living, I'm a laborer or a businessman.

Would any of those excuses mean a thing? No, of course not. Because that's exactly who Jesus was talking to: men who were employed in business, accustomed to the hazards and hardships of their trade. So let us set aside the smoke screen of excuses and take a good, long, hard look at what the call of Christ is all about. In these words is a command and a request. The command is to follow Christ now. What does that entail? What is involved?

First of all, let's be clear about one thing. He did not say "listen to me," but "follow me." Far more is involved than just hearing and knowing what He wants. It means having his love, concern and compassion flowing through our lives. It means taking the same view toward sin and worldliness that He took.

In other words, it means to be like Him, to have the mind of Christ. How can we do that? How can we be conformed more and more into His image? There are two key words that give the answer: fellowship and obedience. By these means we are transformed more and more into His image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What is the result of all this? The answer is thrilling. He will make us fishers of men. He will do it. Christ Himself will undertake the training to make our lives channels of His love and redemption to a lost world.

Do you want that? Of course you do! Be assured of this fact. Whatever your occupation is, Jesus wants us to follow Him and be involved with Him in reaching others with the Gospel.

Witnessing - Romans 1:16

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

Humanly speaking, there may have been something for this learned scholar to be ashamed of in the Gospel. After all, it was the Gospel of One who was hanged on a tree as a common criminal. His teachings were everywhere spoken against. His followers were by and large, made up of the most common people, lowly and despised.

Yet this man who had studied in the great universities of Tarsus at the feet of their most gifted teachers had only one concern: that his life never be a shame to the Gospel. He himself was never ashamed of it! Why? To put it on a positive note, why was Paul proud of the Gospel of Christ? Because the power of the living God was working through the Gospel to bring salvation to all who believe”.

What does the word, “Gospel” mean? Simply stated, it is “good news.” It is the good news of God, concerning His Son. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ and of the grace of God. It is the gospel of your salvation and the gospel of peace. The last book of the Bible calls it the “eternal Gospel.”

In Romans 1:15 the Apostle Paul says, “As much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.” Some newer translations say: “To the extent of my ability, I am eager to preach the Gospel to you that are in Rome.”

Now let's just settle back for a minute and reflect on that. Is that your testimony? Or are you like I am: from time to time you find yourself less than eager to share the gospel with others? Do you leave the breakfast table some mornings with little eagerness to share Christ with those who will cross your path that day? What do you do about that?

Get mad at yourself? What good will that do? Feel ashamed of yourself? How will that help? I'll tell you something you can do that may help. Why not go to the Lord and talk over the whole thing with Him? He'll understand.

Tell Him all about your coldness of spirit and lack of zeal for the Gospel. Then take a bold step: Ask Him to begin to work in your heart and give you an eager spirit. Tell Him you don't expect it overnight, but ask Him to begin to build it into your life patiently and deeply. That you can do.

He will be glad to help you. It is much more on His heart than it is on yours. You can count on Him. Soon this universal good news will have its proper priority in your life.

Proclaim Christ

All Have Sinned - Romans 3:23

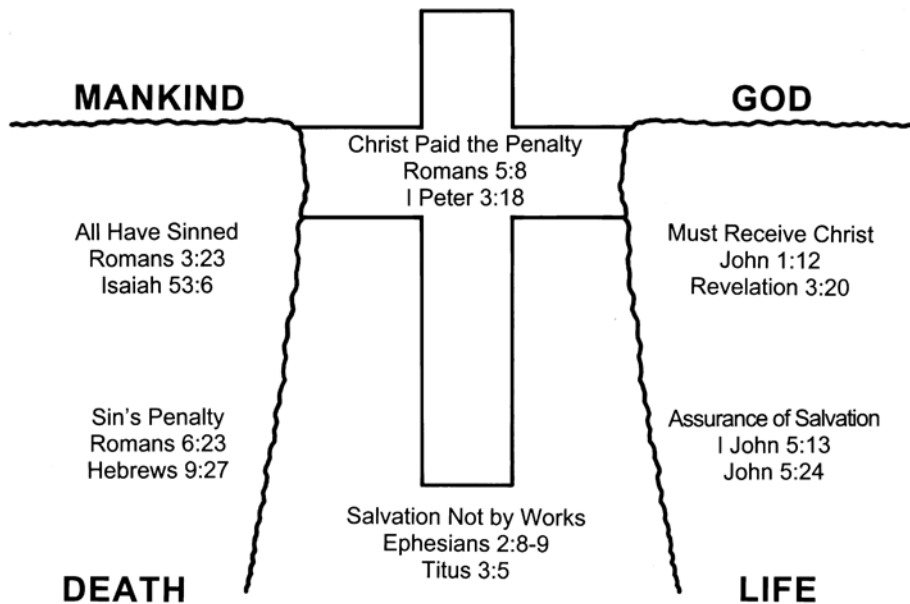
“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

In some ways this verse should be one of the most popular verses in the Bible. It explains so much of what goes on in the world. It gets at the root of so many of the world's ills.

It explains why so much of our tax dollar goes to the judicial system, law enforcement and prison costs. It explains why your automobile needs an intricate lock system to secure the doors and steering wheel. It explains why you have such a difficult time trying to cash a check.

It explains why crime, immorality and injustice are on a rampage. The problem is the fact of sin. The answer of course, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The context of this verse is all-important. Verse 22 informs us that there is no distinction between men. Both Jews and Gentiles are in the same boat since everyone has sinned and has fallen short of the standard of God's righteousness. As a result, today's complex world faces what seems to most people to be insurmountable problems of war, crime, racial strife, and violence of all kinds.



As you might expect, Jesus looked at the problem and went directly to the heart of the matter. He said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

Man's problem is within. All the man-made solutions in the world deal with the symptoms, and not with the cause; and that is sin in the heart. Man-made solutions fall short, just as the arrow

falls short of the target, as the pole-vaulter fails to clear the bar, and as the golfer leaves his putt short of the hole.

By our sin we have come short of the glory of God. In our sin we do not glorify Him, but dishonor His name. We may strut and glorify ourselves before men who look on the outward appearance and who are as corrupt as we are, but there will come a day when all our strutting, pride, and arrogance will cease. By our sin we will come short of the standard of acceptance in the sight of God.

Is there no hope? Must guilty man remain eternally under the wrath of God? Is the disease incurable? No, bless God, it is not.

God is eager to bestow on us His very own righteousness as we place our faith in Jesus Christ. We can be justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Notice the word “freely.” True, it is free to us, but only because Jesus Christ bought and paid for it at the tremendous cost of His own life. He died for our sins. And today the Risen Lord stands with His arms outstretched to a sinful world with His blessed offer of salvation full and free.

All Have Sinned - Isaiah 53:6

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

Whenever I look into the 53rd chapter of Isaiah I feel like I am on holy ground. There is something about this chapter that fills me with wonder and awe. I'm sure it must be the fact that here is presented one of the most magnificent portraits of the Lord Jesus in the whole Bible.

But our verse for the day starts out with another portrait, a portrait of each of us. “All we like sheep have gone astray.” We have all wandered off the path and away from God. We have alienated ourselves from Him by living contrary to His grand and wonderful plan which He designed for each of us.

We are like sheep, which after wandering far afield are unable to find their way back to the fold. And while we wander aimlessly in the barren places of the earth, far from God, we are exposed to the beasts of the field who are bent on our destruction.

We have turned everyone to His own way thereby setting ourselves in competition with the will of God. This is the foolishness of our sin, for the will of God is known to be good, acceptable and perfect. That which sinners choose and devise for themselves is bad, unacceptable and imperfect.

We have willfully and stubbornly gone our own way, the way of our own heart, the way of our own corrupt appetites and passions. We have declared ourselves to be our own God. We do what we want, we have what we want, and we live the way we want.

In light of all of that, can you believe that Almighty God, by a momentous act of mercy and grace has laid on His only begotten Son the iniquity of us all? They were laid upon Christ when He was made sin, a sin offering for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us.

There is only one way of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

He suffered and died for our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions. He made atonement for them and purchased our pardon from them. The crown of thorns on His head was for our sins. The nails in His hands and feet were for our sins. The spear in His side was for our sins.

The torment and pain were for our rebellion. His bruises were for our iniquity. He was delivered to death for our offenses. By submitting to these chastisements He slew the enmity between God and man and made peace by the blood of His cross.

Whereas by our sin we were become odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to His justice, through Christ we are reconciled. Our sins are forgiven. The great and eternal God becomes our father and we become the objects of His love. Amazing grace! By His stripes we are healed.

Sin's Penalty - Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

There are some things you never forget. Like the day you met the person who was to become your husband or wife. In the old days I used to hear men talking about the day they got their first pair of long pants. Or the moment when you walked up to the window of the nursery in the hospital and saw your first-born child for the first time.

When I was a fairly new Christian I had an experience I've never forgotten. It was a radio program, a dramatization of people on a train. It was their first train ride and they were laughing and joking and having a big time. In the midst of it all one of them turned to another passenger and asked if he knew where the train was taking them. No one knew. The laughter subsided some and was replaced by a concern, an apprehension of something mysterious. Then they became somber and silent.

The conductor stepped into the car just as the train entered a long, black tunnel and picked up speed as it plunged down a steep grade. The conductor was the devil; Satan himself. He announced their destination: the place of outer darkness, a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The people started to scream. Some demanded to be returned to the station. Others pled for another chance, but it was too late. The program ended with screams of agony and despair.

You can imagine how this affected me and stuck in my mind. Shortly after that I came across our vital Bible verse for today. Though the way of sin may seem pleasant and inviting, yet the end is dismal. When a person has done his work, he receives his wages. The wages of sin is death - eternal separation from God. All who are the servants of sin will receive their just reward.

By way of contrast eternal life cannot be earned. It is a gift. It is the final reward of a life lived in Jesus Christ. Death is the wages of sin, it comes because it has been earned. Eternal life is a gift. It comes by the grace of God.

The Bible says, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (I John 5:20). “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life is in Jesus Christ.

Right now, if you will sincerely invite Jesus Christ into your life, admit your need, turn from your sin and turn to the Lord, God will bestow upon you the free gift of eternal life. The Bible makes it plain: Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is turning from sin to God, and faith is placing your trust in Jesus. Sinners work their way to hell. Nobody ever worked his way to heaven.

Sin's Penalty - Hebrews 9:27

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Have you ever made an appointment to meet a person or to be in a certain place at a certain time, and then completely forgot about it? It happened to me not long ago. I had a friend visiting from Singapore. He called me and we made an appointment to meet at a restaurant nearby. Then, to my sorrow and shame, I forgot about it. I felt terrible. I immediately went to where he was staying, apologized, and asked his forgiveness.

I'm sure we have all experienced something of that nature. We missed our appointment because of forgetfulness. Or we were delayed by a flat tire, or bad weather or sickness; any number of things. But you know, there is one appointment we are all going to keep unless it is pre-empted by the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Today's vital Bible verse tells us that we are all appointed to die. Notice, “Once to die.” This excludes the possibility of endless re-incarnation which some would have us believe. This verse puts to rest the teaching of re-incarnation. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

There is another appointment spoken of in this verse: the appointment to stand before God at the place of judgment. At that time your eternal state will be determined. This is the unalterable decree of God: you must die and you must be judged.

Now think with me for a minute. There are a lot of things in this life that you have a second chance at. In a ball game, if you come up to bat and strike out, very likely you will come up to bat again for another chance. The movie actor who does not like the way a scene went can have a re-take. Therefore it is a great comfort to the follower of Jesus Christ to know that when he comes to that final appointment it will all go well.

Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Isn't that a tremendous word of encouragement to all who are in Christ? “For me to die is gain!” However, to those who are outside of Christ, death is the final, horrible, unspeakable loss. For the Christian to die is gain. For the non-Christian to die is to lose it all.

The context of this vital Bible verse explains God's provision for our appointment with death and judgment. Jesus Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. My friend, He died that you might live. Repent of your sin. Turn by faith to Christ. Put your trust in Him and receive the gift of eternal life.

Christ Paid the Penalty - Romans 5:8

“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

We've all read of the fabulous gifts that the celebrities of the world give to each other to prove their love. They give a diamond necklace, a Rolls Royce with ermine upholstery, a birthday party where hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on entertainment, food and refreshments. Be that as it may, all of them put together would not equal God's great demonstration of love for you and me.

His gift was given to an unusual group of people. It was given to the helpless and the hopeless. The context of the verse says we were without strength, altogether unable to help ourselves. We were lost, unable to find the way back and utterly without strength.

If you can picture a man lost in a vast wasteland without food and water, all of his strength gone; that's the picture. And then, wonder of wonders, just as all hope was lost and the situation at its most desperate point, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. And notice - for the ungodly! Not only helpless and likely to perish, but ungodly and therefore deserving to perish ... totally unworthy of the love, favor and sacrifice of a holy God.

And what did He do? He extended a gift of love to you and me, yes, to the whole world. That should have settled the matter once and for all. No more would there be any doubt about God's love. His grand and glorious manifestation of love would be the wonder and admiration of the universe. He would do something without parallel in the annals of history.

He would prove His love in the most winning, affectionate, and endearing way imaginable. He would give His Son to die in our place. And wonder of wonders, He would do it for a people who were not only helpless and hopeless, but still enemies of God.

Think of it! That Christ should die for the likes of us is such a mystery, such a paradox, such an unprecedented instance of love that it may well be our business for all eternity to adore Him for it.

Rightly should He make it one of the laws of His kingdom on earth that we who have been thus loved should love our enemies. Jesus taught, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you, for if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:44,46).

Let me ask you, have you ever thanked God for the death of His Son for your sins? Have you ever turned in repentance to God and placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.

Christ Paid the Penalty - I Peter 3:18

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18).

Jesus Christ was no stranger to suffering while He was here on the earth. In spite of the fact that He had no guilt of His own and could have politely declined all suffering if He had chosen to do so, the facts are that He did not. The Bible says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8).

The reason for His suffering was the sins of others. He suffered for sins, but in the case of our Lord, it was the Just for the unjust. He substituted Himself in our place and bore our iniquities. He, who had no sin, was made sin that we who have no righteousness, might be made righteous in the sight of God.

His sacrifice was so great and so worthy, with such merit and perfection that for Him to die once was enough. He suffered once for sins.

You will remember that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were repeated from day to day and from year to year.

Why did He make this sacrifice? To bring us to God; to give us access to God. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews 10:19,20).

Now think with me for a moment. If the eternal Son of God was not exempt from suffering, why should Christians be? Especially when the Bible clearly teaches: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29).

He was perfectly just and righteous. You and I were criminals in the courts of God, having broken His law, defied His commandments, and blasphemed His Name.

So then, let us review the main points of this vital Bible verse: What did Christ do? He died for us and rose again. Why did He do it? To bring us to God.

There are two reasons why He had to bring us. First of all, we had fallen short in our own attempt. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Secondly, we can't make it by our own works. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

So then, in light of it all, let me ask you; have you ever turned to God in repentance and placed your trust in Jesus Christ? Why not do it now?

Salvation Not by Works - Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Let's begin by looking at three vital Bible words in this verse. The first is grace. Grace is that which brings joy and delight. It is the friendly feeling that desires to shower loving kindness and good will. It is free and universal. It is spontaneous. It is the opposite of debt, works or law. As God's grace is bestowed on us it prompts a sense of thankfulness and gratitude.

The second word is faith, a much misunderstood word. It carries the concept of trust, implicit, absolute confidence, a firm conviction. It is in contrast to our present idea of any opinion held in good faith without any assurance or proof.

When we place our faith in God (trust in Him) we are on solid ground. Our faith rests in God Himself. The expression of that faith is our response as we claim His promises and live according to His commands and as we are brought to the obedience of that faith.

The third word is saved. Now, frankly, there was a time when this word was a bit of an embarrassment to me. I didn't have any problem with the words, “redeemed” or “justified,” but “saved” somehow just didn't sound right. I don't have that problem any more, because I've discovered what a great Bible word it is.

It carries the idea of deliverance, of eternal salvation, and of all the blessings of God; showered upon us in the Person of Jesus Christ. It also speaks of being brought safely through, or of being made whole or of being kept safe.

So this vital Bible verse contains three of the great words of the New Testament. We learn a negative lesson from this verse too: it is not of ourselves and it is not of works. Our salvation is not a product of our natural efforts or due to our own merit. All boasting is excluded.

He who glories must not glory in himself but in God. Nothing we have done merits such staggering favors from God.

On the positive side, it springs from God who is rich in mercy. God Himself is the author of this blessed infusion of life and His great love is the spring and fountain from which it flows to flood the earth. He is rich in mercy, inexpressibly great and inexhaustibly given.

We are made aware of it all by divine revelation. The natural outflow from us is a testimony to friends and neighbors. Our testimony is made credible by the evidence of our changed life and transformed interests and desires.

Let me inquire, have you experienced this great love, the mercy and grace of God resulting in eternal salvation in your life? You can, you know. Come to Christ today.

Salvation Not by Works - Titus 3:5

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

The context of this verse paints a picture of our natural state without Christ. When we see our reflection in this verse we ask ourselves, “How could God love me?!”

Take a look at verse 3: “For aye ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus 3:3).

In that light, the Apostle calls upon us to exercise patience and gentleness with those who are still wandering blindly through life without the love and light of Christ. He says, “Think of what you once were.”

Once we were foolish, without any real spiritual understanding. When we remember the follies of our own past, we are more disposed to react kindly to those who today are still living that way.

We were disobedient. We resisted the Word of God and rebelled against the laws of God. How foolish! It is totally contrary to all reason and logic. After all, who should know about life? God, of course. He is the Author of life.

We were deceived, wandering like a lost sheep, from the path of truth and holiness. He goes on to list a total of eight things and then calls our attention to the kindness and love of God our Savior.

All things of course, are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. Our great God and Father in Heaven conceived the glorious plan of redemption. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, carried it out by His death and resurrection. Today the Blessed Holy Spirit is constantly at work to perfect it in our lives.

Think of it. Man in his pride and wretchedness could have prompted wrath, instant and final, from the throne of God. But no! Wonder of wonders, that which flowed from the majesty on High was compassion and love. His great heart chose to save rather than destroy. He delights to show mercy, and where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Therefore, God is the Author, His free grace the foundation and the Gospel the means of our salvation.

All false foundation is removed; it is not by works of righteousness which we have done. Works, good works, must be in the life of the child of God but they are not the cause of our salvation. They are not the root but the fruit of redemption.

The washing of regeneration is inward and spiritual. It cleanses and purifies and does away with the guilt and defilement of sin. Then follows the daily renewing of our lives by the Holy Spirit as the inward man is renewed day-by-day.

Thus we are born of the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, led, guided and strengthened by the Spirit. By His help we walk in God's ways as they are revealed to us in the blessed Old Book, the Word of God.

And as the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Word, we must be careful not to quench, resist or oppose Him, lest He heed our desires and leave us alone.

Must Receive Christ - John 1:12

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name” (John 1:12).

Some time ago I came across a story that had a remarkable ending. It was the story of a wife who became infatuated by the attentions of another man. Soon she left her husband and the two of them began driving across the U.S. in the man's automobile.

After being on the road for just a few hours they were involved in a terrible accident. Some people were killed and she herself was taken to the hospital, paralyzed from the neck down. The man she had been with deserted her and she was left helpless and alone.

After days of remorse and agony she swallowed her pride. She called her husband and told him the whole story. She wondered what he would say, what his attitude would be, and prepared herself for a bitter tirade. She fully expected to be read off and thought that he would make preparations to leave her in her miserable state.

The hour came when he arrived. He came bouncing into the room, smiled, waved his hand and said, “Hi ya beautiful!” He kissed her, took her home, and cared for her in love and tenderness. To me that was a surprise ending.

By way of contrast, think of what happened to Jesus. The context of our verse says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

As a loving father comes home to his wife and children, so Christ came to His own. You would have expected them to have welcomed Him with open arms. He did not come un-expectedly.

The Word of God had plainly stated when and where to expect him. They knew what tribe and family He would arise. He came among them introduced by miraculous signs and wonders. But not only did they not welcome Him, they fortified themselves against Him.

But here is the strangest thing of all. The chief priests were the ringleaders in this contempt and rejection. Why do I say that is strange? Because they were from God's own specially chosen men who had taught the Word of God and were under God's direct command and authority.

Today, why do men reject Christ? The main reason is not intellectual but moral. They will not part with their sins. They will not have Him to reign over them.

Some do, in fact, receive Him and believe on His blessed Name: the Lord our Righteousness, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus our Savior. When we do that we are afforded the highest honor of heaven; we become sons and daughters of the living God.

Have you ever received Him? If not, why not? You can do it right now.

Must Receive Christ - Revelation 3:20

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

Try to imagine this scene: London, in the cold, gray, bitter grip of winter. A man of gentle and noble birth is passing through a tough, grimy section of town in his fine carriage. Suddenly he is set upon by three brothers who drag him from his coach, beat him, spit upon him, curse him, rob him, and then leave him for dead.

He is found by some compassionate people and taken to a hospital where he is nursed back to strength and health. Upon his release from the hospital, his first act is to begin a tireless search for those who beat and robbed him.

After some days he learns their whereabouts and goes to their home. He knocks and a gruff voice from within demands to know who is there and what they want.

The man answers. He has come to make an offer of generosity and help to make friends with his attackers. He is eager to do what he can to make their life pleasant and joyful. He wants to give them aid from his own personal riches and do whatever he can do to demonstrate his love and concern for their wellbeing and welfare.

If you heard a story such as that, you'd call it a fairy tale. Nobody would act like that. Who would go to a grubby, grimy section of town, seek out those who mistreated you, and make an offer to shower them with that which they didn't deserve, and to keep from them that which they really had coming? Such a story couldn't be true.

It is too good to be true! But the fact is, it is true. Today's verse gives us part of the picture. It tells us that Jesus comes to us, in our unworthy and undeserving state. Christ is graciously pleased by His spirit and word to come to the door of the heart of sinners. He comes near in mercy and grace and offers to establish an eternal relationship and abiding fellowship with us.

Naturally, because of our unbelief, ignorance and prejudice against the things of God, He finds the door shut tight against Him. But He does not turn and depart. He patiently knocks. He calls by His Word and the whisperings of his Holy Spirit.

Those who open to Him will find they enjoy His presence and that daily He will bring to their table fresh supplies of comforts and blessings to enrich and strengthen their faith and love. Think of what people are missing when they refuse to open that door to Christ.

If you have never done so, you can do it today. If you do, He will come in and fellowship with you, and bring with Him the gift of forgiveness and eternal life.

Assurance of Salvation - I John 5:13

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13).

The Apostle John says, “These things have I written,” and immediately our curiosity is aroused. What things? Well, of course, many things; but in the context of this verse let's look at just a few.

We can see the privileges and stability of the real Christian. He has the witness of his faith within him. He knows what Christ has done for his soul, what he has seen and found in Him. He has seen his own sin, his guilt, misery and need. And he has seen the glory and magnificence of the Son of God, and how He is exactly suited to his spiritual needs and circumstances.

He has learned to admire the wisdom and love of God in sending the Savior to raise him to pardon, peace and communion with God. He has found the power of the Word of God to humble and heal and comfort his soul. He has found the revelation of Jesus Christ to be the greatest discovery of his life and the most powerful means of kindling and inflaming his love for the blessed and holy God.

He finds strength in Christ to overcome sin, the flesh and the wicked powers of hell. He travels on to an even fuller and richer life in Christ. He has found that there is a mediator in heaven to hear and answer prayer. He is begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He has a fresh confidence in God and has no fear of death and hell. He is sealed unto the day of redemption. In short, he has the witness in Himself.

Of course, the person who does not believe has made God a liar, because he has not believed the record that God gave of His Son. He must believe that God did send His Son into the world, or that He did not. He must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or that He came to deceive the world and to lead it along the path of error and misery.

In these verses we learn that eternal life is a gift, God hath given unto us eternal life. We learn that eternal life is embodied in Jesus Christ, and that it is to be found in one place and one place only. This life is in His Son. Therefore, he that hath the Son hath life and logically, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. He who refuses the Son refuses life itself.

Thus, believers can know that they have eternal life. Notice, it does not say maybe, or hope-so, or possibly. The salvation that Jesus Christ offers is a know-so salvation. You can know for certain today, that your soul is safe in Christ.

Pray. Ask Him to forgive your sins and give you the gift of eternal life. Turn in repentance to God and place your trust in Jesus Christ.

Assurance of Salvation - John 5:24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

If a statement is made, the importance of that statement depends on who said it. For instance, if the mayor of Dallas declared that for the next week the Los Angeles freeways would be closed, it would not affect the L.A. freeways one bit.

Did you ever happen to notice whose words we are quoting in this vital Bible verse? None other than the words of Jesus Himself. The context of this verse tells us that the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. So the One who is speaking is the judge of the world.

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in

himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice” (John 5:25-28).

With that in mind, let us give close heed to these remarkable words. They demand careful attention and immediate assent. He says we must hear and believe.

Why do I say immediate assent? Because the Bible says, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1).

So, we must hear, just as the high school student listens to his teacher explain the content of the final exams, as the waitress in the hotel receives the last minute instructions for the banquet of the visiting royalty, and as the parachutist hears for the final time the procedures to follow for his first jump. It is to hear with attentive ears.

We are not only to hear but also to believe, to place full confidence in, to trust, not to merely agree in the sense that we give assent to its truthfulness, but in the sense of total reliance upon that word from Christ. When I board a plane, I am by that act, declaring that I believe that the manufacturer did his job, that the maintenance men did their jobs, and that the pilot and control tower know their jobs. For the next few hours I have surrendered the destiny of my life to those men. So it is with Christ. I surrender the destiny of my eternal soul to Him and Him alone. I trust Him.

When I do that three things happen to me. I am given the gift of eternal life and I have it here and now. Second, I shall never face judgment for my sins. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” Third, I am passed from a state of eternal separation from God to a place of eternal life with Him. I am passed from death unto life.

Have you heard the word of Christ? Have you turned in repentance and faith to God and placed your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, do it now.

Rely on God’s Resources

His Spirit - I Corinthians 3:16

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I Corinthians 3:16)

The beauty and splendor of Corinth was well known throughout the ancient world. Its wide streets, beautiful harbor and magnificent temples were much spoken of. Various pagan gods and goddesses were held in high esteem. The Corinthians prided themselves on surpassing the other Greeks in the adornment of their temples.

It was a city of wealth and luxury ... and immorality. It was the city that was noted throughout the whole Roman world for its vice and sinfulness. The worship of the various female deities incited the citizens of Corinth to the depths of sin.

In the midst of all of this the Apostle Paul came preaching the Gospel, and many of the Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized. “Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:9-11).

His message was clear and plain. “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:1,2).

So, in the midst of pagan temples and the foulest of immorality, Paul reminds them of the nature of the true temple of God. Apparently false teachers were teaching a loose doctrine that accommodated itself to the tastes of this lewd and wicked city.

This doctrine tended to corrupt and destroy the lives of the new believers. So Paul reminded them that they were really temples of God; living temples that the Spirit of God was raising up for the glory of God, and consecrated completely and totally to Him. Therefore they should keep themselves pure and holy.

Then Paul levels a warning to those who were propagating these loose principles. They will eventually bring destruction upon themselves. They are destroying the very temple in which the blessed Holy Spirit of God has chosen to dwell.

Every Christian is a living temple of the living God. Christ, by His Spirit, lives in all true believers. They are devoted and consecrated to God, set apart for His holy use. They are sacred to Him; a good argument, by the way, against all fleshly lusts which war against the soul. We must do nothing that will hinder our fitness for His service.

Just as you would not think of hauling trash into your church, the house of God, so you must not allow into your life anything that would defile the living temple of the living God.

His Spirit - I Corinthians 2:12

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (I Corinthians 2:12).

Last fall I talked to a first year seminary student who had a question: Does the Holy Spirit help us understand the Bible? One of his professors had told him that the Holy Spirit gave us faith to believe the Bible, but that we were on our own in our interpretation of it.

I shared a few verses with him, where Jesus spoke of the Spirit and said, “For He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, and actually become a part of you!” I then mentioned John 14:26: “But the Comforter who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you”.

Somehow his professor didn't think that applied. Then I shared John 16:13: “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.” Somehow his professor had set that verse aside as well.

Now then, let me ask you, do you believe the Holy Spirit helps us in our understanding of the Bible? Let's take a close look at today's verse. “Now we have received the Spirit of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” What are those things? The next verse tells us they are words, which the Holy Ghost teaches.

Notice: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Corinthians 2:13). Then comes the clincher. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14).

So then, who would be best qualified to teach the Word of God? Of course! The Spirit of God! He knows the things of God because He is one with God. And just as we cannot know what is in the mind of another man until he reveals it, so neither can we know the mind and purposes of God until they are revealed to us by His Holy Spirit.

It is the scriptures, the Holy Bible, that God has chosen as His means of communication with us. By His gracious illumination we know the things freely given to us of God. The truths of God need no garnishing by human skill, but look best dressed in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. The Spirit of God knows much better how to set forth the things of God than the best orators or philosophers.

What's the application of all this? Daily as you open the Word of God and read it, pray the prayer of the psalmist: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

His Strength - Isaiah 41:10

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

Fear is a fairly frequent visitor to most people. Periodically fear will pay an unfriendly call and in some cases, it will hang around for quite a while. People fear lots of things. Some people are afraid of heights. Others are afraid of the dark. Some people are afraid of being alone in their

house or apartment overnight. People fear dogs. People are afraid of flying in airplanes. Some form of fear is a rather common experience to most people.

In Isaiah 41:10 the Lord speaks to this problem. He tries to put fear in perspective for us. Time and again God has come to His people through His Word with the command - "Fear Not." From Genesis onward comes this clear word from God.

It is obvious that God does not want His people to go through life shivering, trembling, and shaking with fear. We are not to be a timorous, timid, intimidated people, cowering in the corner, afraid of our own shadows, or afraid of the shadow of anyone else. We are not to flinch and shrink from life as it is.

He does not want us to go through life with our knees knocking, our hair standing on end, our teeth chattering, or chills running up and down our spines. His reason for calling upon us to not fear is simple: "for I am with thee."

When I was in the Marine Corps I was much skinnier than most of the guys in my unit. So I made friends with one of the biggest, brawniest, toughest, and most muscular guys in our outfit. Nobody picked on me because I was always with my buddy and on one wanted to tangle with him. I had a powerful ally. Think for a minute what God is telling us here. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee." If anything should be able to silence our fears and encourage our faith, that should do it.

Again in verse 13 He says, "For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not; I will help thee." Do not fear the threatening of your enemy. Do not doubt the promises of your God. How close is He? Within calling distance? No. "I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved" (Acts 2:25).

He says, "Be not dismayed, for I am thy God!" Are you weak? "I will strengthen thee." Are you friendless, alone, forsaken? "I will help thee!" Do you feel you are ready to go under, to sink, to fall? "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." What is the thing you fear today? I imagine it's pretty big, isn't it? How big is it compared to God? What is it that has you biting your fingernails, spending sleepless nights, and so upset you can't eat?

How will you deal with it? Pretend it's not there? Nonsense! Of course it's there! But so is the Lord your God. And when you face a challenge or responsibility or situation that is beyond your own abilities you can draw from God's unlimited resource of strength.

His Strength - Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

The Apostle Paul had learned one of the great lessons of life. He said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Fantastic! Here was a man who had found

satisfaction in life. Very few people do, you know. But he had found contentment everywhere and in all things; in life as a whole and in its separate, various little parts.

He had learned contentment whether his stomach was full or empty, whether he had all the good things of life or none of them. He said, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12).

Where had he learned such a tremendous lesson? At the feet of Gamaliel, his great instructor? No, not this lesson; he had learned this at the feet of Christ. He had been in bonds, imprisonments and necessities often, and had learned to make the best of it.

To learn how to suffer want and not be overcome by doubt or fear is a tremendous thing. Many have come to distrust God or lose their joy in Him. To learn how to be full is equally difficult, if not more so.

It is not easy to learn how to abound and not become proud or secure in ourselves, or to drift toward a life of luxury. The temptations of fullness and prosperity are no less than those of afflictions and want. But how can we learn it? Today's verse tells us: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”. Only through Christ.

He told the Ephesians to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” He had told Timothy, “Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”. He reminded the Ephesians that we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

Here is an interesting thing: It is Christ who is strengthening me and goes on continually strengthening me. By His constant and renewing strength I am enabled by Him to carry on. I am wholly dependent on Him for all my spiritual power. So here is a universal extension of this truth to every facet of life.

The first essential is to toss away all notions of self-sufficiency, to recognize our weakness and sin, and to find that strength which is made perfect in weakness.

Doesn't it make sense to trust in Him rather than self? When we consider our foolishness and His wisdom, our weakness and His strength, our sin and His perfection; what better motto for life? “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

His Faithfulness - Lamentations 3:22-23

“It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

In reflecting on his life, the prophet called to mind a dark and depressing picture. He had seen affliction. He spoke of the bitterness of gall and travail. He knew of heavy chains and

un-answered prayer. He knew the rocky and crooked path. He had been desolate, and the people had held him in derision. He had experienced poverty and weakness and a life without hope.

Then, like a ray of brilliant sunshine bursting into the dungeon of gloom, he remembered something else, and when he remembered that, his despair turned to hope. He remembered the faithfulness of God. When God's faithfulness exploded on the scene, the clouds began to scatter, the sky began to clear, and the melancholy music was replaced by the songs of Zion.

It healed the broken heart, restored the sagging spirit, and returned the long-forgotten smile. The streams of mercy flooded his soul and he began to realize that although things were bad, they might have been worse and in all likelihood they would get better.

Time and again through the centuries, the people of God have faced hardships. Daniel was in a dungeon. Jonah was in the belly of the whale. Joseph was left to languish in a foreign prison. Paul faced storm, shipwreck, and beatings with whips and rods. The first century Christians were placed in the arena of Rome to be mangled by savage beasts.

Later, those who translated the Word of God, were burned at the stake. Missionaries have been martyred by savages and beheaded by enemies of the cross. Pain, suffering, and death have been common companions to those who follow the Lord. And, like Moses' burning bush, the church of Jesus Christ is not consumed. It is alive and vigorous in every clime and nations.

The inexhaustible fountain of mercy from the Father of mercies still flows full and free; it will never fail nor run dry. His mercies are new every morning, with each new day they cover the earth with their sweet fragrance of love. When human comforts fail, God's compassions do not. The truth of the Lord endures forever. Therefore, we can hope in Him.

Two things stand out in this passage. He speaks of a difficult life. Well, think with me for a moment. An easy life can make us indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, deaf to the Word of God, and secure in ourselves. Afflictions, on the other hand, can humble us, show us the vanity of the world, soften our hearts, and be used to bring us to our senses and then to God.

The faithfulness of God is also a major theme. In spite of our failures, unfaithfulness and folly, God is faithful. Therefore: "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lamentations 3:26).

His Faithfulness - Numbers 23:19

"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

Some years ago about half a dozen of us working at the Navigators Headquarters at Glen Eyrie were called upon to meet in a committee to revise the Topical Memory System. The one we had

been using was made up of 108 verses with 36 topics. We felt that it was too long for the average person to cope with.

We wanted to shorten it, to make it a bit more manageable to encourage more people to complete the entire course. We still wanted it to contain a balanced spiritual diet of the basics of the Christian life.

We wanted it to give the facts of the Gospel, some of the resources of God upon which a Christian can rely, a challenge to discipleship, and growth in Christ-likeness. We faced a major problem: which of the 36 topics would we eliminate? The new course would only have 30. We prayed, we thought, we discussed, we asked counsel, we did everything we knew to do.

And one-by-one there was agreement as to which ones should be left out. But here's an amazing thing. There was one topic that we added which had not been there before, and we added two new verses to cover this topic. Both of them were from the Old Testament and today's verse is one of the two. It seemed to us that the faithfulness of God was a resource that was so great and so vital that it had to be included. Most of us had experienced the blessing of having this verse written upon the table of our hearts. It was our prayer that thousands of Christians would experience the same strength and comfort that we had found in this word from God.

One of the prime reasons we can rely on God's faithfulness is that He is not a man. He is unchangeable. James tells us that with Him there is no variation, neither shadow of turning. The Bible also says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Men change their minds and break their word. God does neither. He never recalls His promises. Although the Bible was written thousands of years ago, the promises are as true today as they were the day they were written.

“Wherein, God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:17,18). When God wanted to show the heirs of His promise the immutability of His counsel, He confirmed it by an oath.

Christian, your faith is based on the sure word of God. This is the word which liveth and abideth forever. God has given us promises in His Word concerning the things we need in daily experience. Believe God. Take Him at His word. God is faithful!

His Peace - Isaiah 26:3

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

In the 1950's I was in Dallas on a ministry assignment. We were having a rally in the Nav home and I was to give my testimony. Shortly before the meeting the phone rang. It was long distance, for me. A friend was calling from my home town of Nealo, Iowa. “LeRoy, I've got some bad

news for you. Your father has passed away. Your mom is holding up pretty well. You'd better come right home.”

When I hung up the phone I called to find out when the next train left for Omaha. It was later that night. We went ahead with the rally. I gave my testimony and then someone took me to the train. I was there all alone with my thoughts as the train rattled northward.

Naturally I got out my Bible and began to read. I was reading in Isaiah and came across the verse we are looking at today. It suddenly struck me. That's what's going on in my life right now!

Although I had the normal reactions of sadness and lonesomeness and was apprehensive as to what I'd find when I got home, my heart was at perfect peace.

I was a fairly young Christian at the time and as I look back on that experience, I realize that it was one of those times, early in my walk with God, that He began to teach me the reality of these promises in His Word. They are more than just tremendous words to be carved in redwood and hung on the wall.

They are words that will prove true in daily experience; words that we can build our lives on; words that have behind them the character of God Himself.

Peace is a rare commodity these days. Nations are at each other's throats. Races, if they are not actually hitting each other, are eyeing one another with the kind of hatred that can explode any minute. Members of different religions who have lived together under shaky conditions for years, have turned to violence and bloodshed.

And, individuals who face the world scene and the uncertainties of the future, walk around with hearts that are burdened by a lack of peace. What is the secret to perfect inward peace?

Two things are brought out in this verse. First of all, a mind that is stayed upon the Lord. As we keep the Lord in the forefront of our minds and reflect upon His goodness and grace, the peace of God will make itself known and will become a reality in our lives. The second is a mind that is resting in the Lord in simple faith, in spite of the outward circumstances of life. So it is a heart stayed or fixed on God and a heart that rests in the Lord and trusts His Word.

The Psalmist said, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord” (Psalm 112:7).

His Peace - I Peter 5:7

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (I Peter 5:7).

Let's say you are walking along a path with a friend. You are tired, hungry and weak. On your back is a heavy load and you are about to stumble under its weight. Your friend has just eaten. He is well rested and strong. He is a physical giant of a man; big muscles, powerful frame, in

perfect physical condition. He asks you if you would let him carry your load. He is so big, so powerful, that he would hardly notice its weight.

Would you let him do it? He is ready, willing and able. Would you smile and say, “Thanks a lot,” and give him your burden? Or would you insist on carrying it yourself while he pled with you to let him take it?

Think about that in light of your walk with God. From time to time burdens come our way that are heavy to bear. Paul says, “We groan, being burdened.” God, who is walking with us, has a word for us. Our verse for today refers back to a psalm: “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22). What a promise!

The best way to relieve yourself of your burden is to cast it upon the Lord. God takes no delight in seeing tears in your eyes or a look of sadness on your face. Your groans and sighs are not music to His ears. And here is an amazing thing: He will not only carry the burden, but He will also infuse you with new strength to bear you up and keep you from falling. He will sustain you: “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

Then comes the promise: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Never! Do you believe that? Oh, you may move as the limbs of a tree in a violent wind, but you will never topple. You stand firm when you stand in God.

One of the most famous men of our day is an architect. He has world-wide fame. Do you know how he got it? Years ago there was an earthquake in a great city and when the dust had settled, his building was the only one left standing. There it stood, all alone, bringing glory to its designer and builder. The world asked: “who is this man?” And instantly his work was in demand around the globe.

This is the promise of God. Like pillars, the godly in Christ stand immoveable, to the glory of the heavenly architect.

Why does the Lord do this? Why will He carry our burdens, sustain us, cause us to not be moved? Because “He careth for you”. So take your burdens and cares and give them to God lest they torture and distract your mind, hinder your service and rob you of the joy of the Lord.

His Provision - Romans 8:32

“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

The love of God is the basis of our confidence and security in this life. We know that God loves us by the many great things and small things that He does for us day by day. The greatest exhibition of love which surpasses all others is the gift of His own Son.

As the explosion of the atom bomb overshadows the pop of a toy balloon, as the giant jumbo jet overshadows the child's toy airplane, as Mount Everest overshadows a mole hill on the prairie, so the gift of God's Son overshadows all other gifts from the hand of our loving Father.

Now we know that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

But in the multitude of the galaxy of God's gifts, one stands out above all else ... "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).

This gift shows the depths of sin, for it took the precious blood of Christ Himself to purify our hearts by faith. This gift shows the depths of God's love - He spared not His own Son.

In light of that staggering fact, if God has done the greatest He can do, He will not leave the less undone. Infinite love cannot change. Notice, God will, "with Him freely give us all things." All the blessings of heaven are in Christ. Paul speaks of the riches of His glory. He tells us, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9-10).

He speaks of Christ: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

So Paul's argument is plain. If a person were to give you a Cadillac, wouldn't he also give you the spare tire that is in the trunk? If a person gave you a palatial mansion, would he not also give you the key to the front door? If a person gave you a lovely meal, would he not also give you a glass of water to go with it?

So then, Paul raises a question of logic. Since our loving Father freely gave us the very best He had, His own Son to die for us, would He withhold from us anything else we might need? No. He wants to provide us with the things we need even more than we want to receive them. Thank God for His abundant and constant provisions!

His Provision - Philippians 4:19

"But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

A friend of mine, a fairly new Christian, was at a religious conference some years ago when an offering was taken to meet the needs of a missionary who was on his way overseas. As my friend heard the need explained he felt that he should give something. The longer he listened to the needs of the missionary and his family, he became convinced that he should have a substantial part in the endeavor.

But he had a problem. In his billfold he knew he had two bills, a twenty and a one. He had traveled many miles to get to the conference and his car needed gas. He didn't want to give the one-dollar bill; it didn't seem to be enough. He was afraid to give the twenty, what would he have to eat on and what would he use for gas? He didn't want to stop the plate as it went by and fumble around and make change for the \$20. What to do?

Then an idea hit him. Why not leave the choice with God? So he prayed and asked the Lord to make the choice. He closed his eyes, reached into the billfold, took out a bill, and opened his eyes. It was the twenty! His faith began to waver just a little. So with perspiration on his forehead and his heart beating a little faster, he put the \$20 into the plate.

Suffice it to say that he made it home. The minor miracles that God wrought to do it and the great lessons God taught him are another story. Now as he looks back on the experience he can see how God used it to strengthen his faith to rely on God's resources and provision.

That's what today's verse is all about. This church had made a sacrifice, acceptable and well pleasing to God. Paul writes to them and says: "You supplied my needs out of your great poverty. Now God shall supply your needs out of His great riches and abundance."

You cannot out give God. If you give to the Lord by the teaspoon from your meager supply, He will respond by the shovel full, out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He shall supply all your needs.

So, an offering made freely in grateful love to God will not go unnoticed. They had given to Paul, God's servant, who was carrying on the work of God to the glory of God. So Paul says, my God shall supply all your needs, both spiritual and temporal. What a promise!

His Help in Temptation - Hebrews 2:18

"For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

A friend of mine once told me, "LeRoy, I can resist anything but temptation." I think that's true of most people. It's a universal malady. From the most modern cities to the most primitive tribes, people are pretty much alike when it comes to the problem of temptation. No one is exempt.

Is there an answer to that, or do we all just shrug our shoulders and tell ourselves, "Well, that's the way it is and nothing can be done about it." We face a temptation, we give in, we feel remorse and resolve to do better, and then another temptation comes and the cycle repeats itself. Is that how the whole world has to go through life? No. Thank God, no.

Now the reason I say, "Thank God," is because He has taken the initiative to help us with this problem. Our verse for today speaks to this problem. And the context of this verse is really exciting. Verse 16 says, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16).

In the fullness of time Christ took upon Himself our human nature and was made in the likeness of men. He came on a rescue mission. Now think of that! The angels fell and they were left under the defilement and dominion of sin.

It was never in the plan of God to give His only Begotten Son to be the Savior of the fallen angels. Like a giant tree in the forest, they fell and they remain right there in their fallen state. No one was there to lift them up.

But wonder of wonders, when man fell God, at a tremendous cost to Himself, looked upon us in pity and took a bold step. "Surely He hath borne our sins and carried our sorrows." He restored us to a place of special favor and salvation. He became man because no higher or no lower nature could raise us to a place of hope and make us the children of God. Neither angel nor animal could atone for the sin of man. He became man so that He might die.

Who was the first sinner? Eve? No. Adam? No. It was Satan! And Christ came to destroy his power over the human race. He suffered, being tempted. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is the Great Physician who Himself has experienced the disease and therefore can look upon us with compassion; not the disease of sin, but temptation and trouble of soul. He remembers His own sorrows and temptations and it makes Him mindful of the trials of His people.

Do you need help today? Turn to Christ. He knows all about it and stands ready to help. Are you weak? He is strong. He can deliver you.

His Help in Temptation - Psalm 119:9,11

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word. Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:9, 11).

We know from the Scripture, and from experience, that Satan our enemy, relentlessly tempts us to sin. Temptations also come from within. The Bible says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14).

But regardless of the source of temptation, we are promised that we can have victory. "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 which ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

Today's verse gives a primary means of combating temptation. We can have victory over temptation and keep our lives pure by saturating our hearts with God's Word. The Word of God is the "sword of the Spirit."

Jesus used this sword to overcome Satan's temptations in the wilderness. One important reason for memorizing Scripture is to make this sword available to the Holy Spirit 24 hours a day.

Let me pass along a few tips on successful scripture memory. It helps to use the buddy system. Thousands have memorized scripture alone. However, memorizing with another person often provides the needed stimulus for success. We all need encouragement in our Christian lives and this surely applies to memorizing scripture. Get together with a friend who is also memorizing the Word of God so that you can be of mutual help in learning and checking your verses.

When you memorize, don't confuse knowledge with application. Some think that Bible knowledge automatically leads to spiritual maturity. They assume that knowing more about the Bible automatically makes them better Christians. This is not necessarily true.

The Pharisees knew the Old Testament, yet their lives did not bring glory to God. The key to spiritual maturity is application of God's Word to the life by the blessed Holy Spirit of God.

It is virtually impossible to remember something if we don't concentrate on it at the beginning. So, when you are memorizing a verse, give it your undivided attention. Satan will do all he can to distract you from concentrating on the Word.

Scripture memory is one of four methods of intake of the Word into our lives. We can hear the Word; we can read it; we can study it; and, or course, we can memorize it.

Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, was a man who faithfully practiced each of these forms of intake for many years. Toward the end of his life, he said that his experience had been that the consistent practice of Scripture memory paid greater dividends than any other form of Scripture intake.

Let me encourage you to try it. I'm sure you'll like it. You will experience cleansing of life and help in temptation as you learn to write the Word of God on the table of your heart.

Be Christ's Disciple

Put Christ First - Matthew 6:33

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

I saw a wall plaque one time that read, “Why pray when you can worry?” I think it was meant to be humorous, but it wasn't to me at the time. The problem was that I had been following the advice of the plaque.

I think a lot of Christians probably do the same thing. A problem arises and rather than let God handle it they begin to lose sleep, grow tense, bite their fingernails, become irritable and deepen, the wrinkles in their foreheads. How much better to leave all that and follow the direction of Jesus.

The context of this verse gives lots of common sense instruction. For one thing, worry doesn't do one bit of good. We can rip our minds apart with the cares of this world and it accomplishes nothing. A tormenting, worrisome care that sends our minds reeling hither and yon or dangles it in suspense disrupts our joy in the Lord and throws a wet blanket on our hope in the Lord.

This is not to say we should not be diligent in proportioning our expenses or praying for our daily bread. Of course we should. It simply means we should dwell in confidence in God.

He then speaks of the future. We should not worry about the future or conversely, boast about tomorrow. Likewise tomorrow also is in God's hands. He reminds us that life is more than food and raiment. Food and raiment are the products of the earth. Life is from God.

God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul. We can trust God to care for our souls which are eternal. Can we not then trust Him to care for our bodies which are temporal? If we were as confident about tomorrow as the birds of the air we would sing as joyfully as they. And why not?

Our granddaughter has two parents and two grandmothers who diligently watch out for all those things that would be attractive on the child and attractive to the child, and then they do all within their power to provide it. Jesus said, "Your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these things."

He then says we have better things to think about: the kingdom of God. Let our thoughts be marshaled to think of the advancement of God's kingdom and we will be less concerned for self.

There is a more sure way to obtain the necessities of this life. Put God first and all else will follow. What a change it would make in our lives if we truly believed this; that the best way to live this life is to be most intent on the life that follows.

Put Christ First - Luke 9:23

"And He said to them all, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

One day Christ was alone praying. When He had finished He went to His disciples who were nearby and asked, "Whom say the people that I am?" They proceeded to inform Him of the various conjectures concerning Him that they had heard. Obviously he had been quite a topic of conversation among the people.

There is a point here that is easily missed, which leaders should note. Those who lead and teach could better suit their doctrine, reproofs, corrections, and instructions in righteousness and counsel to the lives of ordinary people if they would chat with them from time to time.

They could sense the real needs and be better able to share things that would scratch where people itch. The better acquainted a doctor is with the patient, the more he knows how to treat him.

Jesus then asked what they believed and Peter said it: “the Christ of God”. After Jesus had risen from the dead, Peter made the streets of Jerusalem ring with this same affirmation. “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Jesus then changed the course of the conversation and spoke clearly and forcefully about the great purpose for His visit to this small and troubled planet. “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the leaders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day” (Luke 9:22). He had come to die. He was going to lay down His life.

Then followed this dramatic challenge to His men. If they would follow, they must be willing to give up all rights to themselves. What does it take to follow Christ? Everything!

It means to disregard one's own personal interests, to disown ones self. I'm sure you've heard of people who have become followers of Christ and were disowned by their families. They no longer belonged to that household, they were completely cut off. That's the idea behind Jesus' words.

We no longer belong to ourselves. We are no longer a part of the old life. The Bible says: “In which times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:2-3).

We are to bear with patience whatever cross the Lord lays on us. We must not indulge our desire for ease and appetite, for then it proves difficult to bear toil and weariness for Christ.

As we follow Christ, the precious promise becomes a reality. “For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:24).

Separate from the World - I John 2:15-16

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:15-16).

Why not love the world? What's wrong with the joy that comes to my heart and the affection I feel for the streets of my old home town? Especially when I go back and see the little one room school house where I began my education, or the old farm with its big red ramshackle barn and rambling two story house. What's wrong with my feeling good when I go outside today and stand

beside the creek that runs through our back yard, or glance up and gaze at the awesome majesty of Pikes Peak? Wasn't the world made by God, and doesn't the Bible say, "and God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good"?

Yes, of course, it does, but this passage is not talking about that. John is talking about an attitude of rebellion against God, the worldly ambition, vanity and pride that permeates our society. All that traps us into forgetting God and makes us antagonistic to the will of God, that's what we are to "love not."

Remember when Jesus taught the parable of the sower: "And these are they that are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 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" (Mark 4:18, 19).

I watched a cornfield be destroyed by weeds. We had a neighbor who planted a field of corn and cultivated it once, and then left it alone. Every farmer in the state of Iowa knows you have to cultivate corn three times, but he cultivated it once.

After the crop had been ruined my older brother asked him why he had done it. "Well," he said, "it was just an experiment." In the parable, Jesus spoke of two things: the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. Cares can sap my vigor and riches can divert my faith.

The real reason for not loving this world is found in the context. "The world passeth away, and the lust of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:17).

It is the basic problem of setting our affections on the temporal rather than on the eternal. We are prone to be short-sighted, to begin to grab for things that are in the world and not see as God sees, or love as God loves.

So the Apostle John is trying to protect us from a life of frustration and disappointment. The world and all of its tinsel, glitter and empty praise cannot satisfy. All we do is pour our affections down a rat hole when we set our minds on the things of this world. What a waste!

Separate from the World - Romans 12:2

"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).

Some time ago a young Christian asked me, "What do you think heaven is going to be like?" As we talked we concluded that it sure wasn't going to be like the world around us. This morning's newspaper had stories of scandal, death, destruction, hypocrisy, greed, a few shady deals, plots to overthrow a government, shooting in the streets, racial strife; and that was just the front section of the paper! I haven't seen the rest of it yet. Who knows what I'll find there, if I take the time or even bother to read it?

One thing is for sure: Those of us who began our pilgrimage to the Holy City certainly wouldn't want to pattern our lives after all of that, especially if we have the option of conforming our lives to the ways of heaven. So the Apostle Paul beseeches us not to copy the temporal and fleeting fashions, standards and lifestyle of the present time, but to be wholly transfigured by the renewing of our minds.

Of course, we cannot accomplish that by human endeavor. It is God who turns us and then we are turned. We must place our minds under the powerful and transforming influence of the blessed Holy Spirit of God. We must trust God for grace as we apply God's means of grace. This will bring a change in our thinking and thus in our lives.

The most powerful way I know to do that is to invest time with the Lord day by day, and to get into the Word and spend time in prayer. Through this the Holy Spirit can make the truth of God meaningful and real, so that not only our minds are affected, but also our hearts. The Bible says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

This is the process of sanctification that Paul spoke of in II Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

What image? Whose likeness? Again the Apostle does not leave us in the dark. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, how's that for a challenge? When you think of all that you know about yourself and all that you know about Jesus, where does that leave you? Dangling? In despair? Convinced there is no use? I hope not.

Think how far the Apostle Paul had come: from Saul of Tarsus, the murderer of believers, to the writer of these blessed words. So take heart. Yes, growth is slow, but if we meet the conditions in the Word of God, it is sure.

Don't be discouraged. Get into the Word, pray, obey what God speaks to you about, and start proving what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

Be Steadfast - I Corinthians 15:58

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

Once again we have a verse starting with "therefore," so we've got to look to see what it is there for. Here it is obvious, because there is a hereafter, an eternity of which we are a part. Anything that we do in the name and for the cause of Christ cannot be in vain. It will count for all the ages to come. Our daily and ultimate victory is in Jesus Christ.

So this chapter which is filled with deep theological thoughts and truths, sublime logic, and masterful eloquence, closes with a very practical, every day challenge to keep on keeping on. The Bible never makes a separation between keeping our eyes on the life that now is and the life that is to come.

Just what is the exhortation? It is three fold. First, that we should be committed and firm in the faith of the gospel and the resurrection of Christ. Because He lives, we shall live also.

Second, that we should be unmovable in our hope and expectation in Christ. Our hope is a solid hope, built on the sure foundation of the promise of God who cannot lie. This hope will see us through the pressures of life, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

Third, we are to abound in the work of the Lord. To keep active in the work of Christ requires constant growth in love, obedience and holiness. We cannot continue to bear fruit upward if we neglect to take root downward. It is the people who know their God who will be strong and do exploits.

Now this does not mean that all our expectations will be realized and that all of our hopes and dreams fulfilled. You and I have read of missionaries who went to a foreign land, labored tirelessly in that ministry of the Gospel, and saw little fruit for their labor.

We know of moms and dads who went to their graves with a son or daughter still walking the way of the world. We know of honest, godly, dedicated people who have suffered much. But we know the reward of Christ is sure.

When He greets you in heaven with “well done, thou good and faithful servant,” it will be worth it all. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).

If we serve Him here on earth, we shall reign with Him in heaven. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Be Steadfast - Hebrews 12:3

“For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:3).

In a recent international track meet some runners were booed simply because they were citizens of a particular country. When the men began to run, the people in the stands began to heap ridicule and insults upon them. Later in an interview they acknowledged that it was bad for their morale and distracted them from their best efforts. Nevertheless, they continued to strive and won the race.

The sponsoring committee deplored the behavior of the crowd in the stands, but it didn't change what had happened. In addition to the understandable nervousness that comes to athletes who are competing in an important event, and in addition to the strain on their lungs and muscles, there was the added burden of the hostility of the thousands in the bleachers.

It generally comes as a surprise to a new Christian to discover that some of his non-Christian buddies act differently toward him after he began to follow the Lord. But as he begins his study of the Word of God a few things begin to clear up. He comes across some verses that warn him of this very thing.

John, the apostle of love said, “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you” (I John 3:13). Jesus gave some insights as to the reason: “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). Often you and I are hated by the world simply because our citizenship is in Heaven. We are surrounded by people who mind earthly things. We are citizens of heaven, therefore our speech and lifestyle sometimes appear strange.

I recall an incident in which a railroad was being built and some workers from another country were brought in to help. Their dress was different. Their speech was different. Their behavior was different. They ate different food. They appeared strange to the local people and were treated unkindly by them. They cheated them, made fun of them, called them names, ridiculed and despised them.

Jesus warned us that the world would hate us because we are not of this world. On one occasion He said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will also keep yours. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:18-21).

So when hostility, persecution and ridicule come, consider what Jesus went through for you. It does no good to violently react. Jesus, our example in all things, steadfastly endured the unjust opposition heaped upon Him by sinners.

He knows all about it. Turn to Him, trust Him and He will see you through.

Serve Others - Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

The disciples were amazed. They were in imminent danger and they knew it. The Sanhedrin was opposed to Jesus and they trembled when they thought of it. Was Jesus unaware of the danger that awaited them?

Hardly! “And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed and, as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things would happen unto him, saying, behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again” (Mark 10:32-34).

As the captain of their salvation He marched at the head of the column and was soon to be made perfect through suffering. The courage of Christ in facing the suffering to accomplish our salvation is still the wonder of His disciples, centuries later.

It is interesting that He did not try to soothe their fears or calm their troubled spirits by giving them false hopes. He told it like it was.

Two of his men then made a request that aggravated the others. They asked, when the kingdom was established, that they be granted the privilege of sitting by His side in His glory. It is true that the request emerged from selfishness and worldly ambition. But let us look at another side of it.

Is not their request an expression of faith? They knew He was to die. But their request also declares loud and clear that they believed in His resurrection and ultimate triumph.

The answer of Christ is gentle and beautiful. Places of honor and leadership in the kingdom of God are not given by political appointment, but are for those who suffer and serve, for those who give rather than grasp, who endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Typically, Jesus uses the occasion to teach them a lesson. Among the leaders of the world greatness is measured by how many servants a person has, and by how much power and prestige is his. But not in the kingdom of God. Service is the hallmark of greatness and from this law even the king is not exempt.

Worldly honor is a glittering thing by which even the eye of Christ's own disciples had been dazzled from time to time. When that happens to us we only have to turn our eyes upon Jesus who took upon Himself the form of a servant, who became obedient unto death. Should we not be eager to live for and serve those for whom Christ died?

Naturally, this is not easy. But then, very few things that really count are. Our only hope of achieving this lifestyle is to closely follow Him who showed the way.

Serve Others - II Corinthians 4:5

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake” (II Corinthians 4:5).

Once I heard a statement that went like this: “No man is remembered for what he received, but for what he gave.” I'm not sure that's the exact quote, or who said it, but it struck me as having a ring of truth. Think about that. If you read of a person who inherited a lot of money you don't say, “What a great accomplishment.” But if you hear of a person who, in an effort to serve his fellow man, sacrificed something of his life and possessions, you are impressed.

We remember Dr. David Livingston who left his home in Scotland, where he could have had a life of ease as a physician, and went to Africa and gave all he had including his life. Visitors to Scotland still go to his birthplace and see the house where he was reared, to try to become better acquainted with him through the information and displays that are there. As I walked through those rooms I was struck with the greatness of this man. He was a true servant.

In this verse the Apostle tells us two things that he doesn't do. First: he doesn't talk about himself. Now I've got to admit that there are some people who I try to get to talk about themselves. There are some people who are so interesting that I am eager to find out what makes them tick. I like to hear where they have been, what they've done and what they've learned. I always feel I can learn something from that will help me in my own life.

Then there are others whom I try to avoid. They preach themselves. They brag. They have a way of making themselves look big and you look small. Paul said he didn't do that. He preached Christ.

The second thing he didn't do was serve himself. He didn't live for himself. His life was not consumed with himself. His needs, comforts, likes and dislikes did not occupy a central place in his mind. If not, what did?

Simple. He thought of ways he could serve others. He was consumed with their spiritual needs and eternal destinies. Again, his motive was not to make himself look good, but to do it for the sake of Christ Jesus His Lord. Therefore, Paul is not remembered for what he received, but for what he gave. He gave himself to the service of Christ, knowing that in this life if we would serve Christ we must serve others.

Give Generously - Proverbs 3:9-10

“Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9-10).

About ten years ago I was directing a summer conference at Glen Eyrie, the Navigators' conference center in Colorado Springs. I was in a meeting where Rod Sargent was speaking on the subject of giving. Before he began his message he took a poll of the audience. There were about 200 conferees and he asked them a question that could be answered with either yes or no.

He gathered the slips of paper, quickly tabulated them and announced the result. The overwhelming majority had answered “no.” In fact, all but a half dozen or so had answered the

question with a “no.” Now they were all Christians, most of them carrying responsibilities in their local churches. The question was this; “Do you feel you are a generous person?”

The verse gives a command and a promise. We are told to honor the Lord. Our lives are to bring honor and glory to Him. Paul tells us to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are God's.

The way we live, think, act, and re-act all are to honor the Lord. But in this verse a further revelation is given as to how to do that. We are to honor Him with our substance, how we use what we have. Do we use our automobile to honor the Lord? Do we use our bank accounts to honor Him? How about our golf clubs, tennis racquet, television sets? The command is clear. “Honor the Lord with thy substance.” Then He goes on to say, “and with the first fruits of all thine increase.” When riches increase we are tempted to honor ourselves and set our hearts on the things of this world.

Notice three words: 1) First fruits; God who is first and best should have the first and best; 2) All; in everything where God has prospered us, we must honor Him; 3) Thine; it is yours. God gave it to you to be used according to His will and His Word. It is not how much you have, but what you do with it; the way it is used.

Then the promise: “So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” The New Testament cross-reference is Luke 6:38 - “Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete it shall be measured to you again.”

Moses, in the Law, taught: “the first of the fruits of the land shalt thou bring into the house of the Lord.” The Prophet Malachi taught, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and try me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). Here we have instruction from the Law, and the Prophets, and the Proverbs and the teaching of Jesus Himself.

Give Generously - II Corinthians 9: 6-7

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (II Corinthians 9:6-7).

Good sound, clear, simple, Christ honoring, Bible based instruction on giving to the Lord and His work is hard to find. Often our giving is a result of some sort of emotional pressure. Sometimes a joke is told to get us in a good mood.

I've been in meetings where the leader of the meeting will wave something, a five or ten dollar bill. Through these means the person is badgered into giving more than he feels he should and thus gives grudgingly: Or he will give something with a reluctant spirit, feeling under pressure

and thus gives of necessity. Soon the person is turned off to the whole idea and is robbed of one of the greatest blessings of the New Testament faith.

Giving is truly one of the most God-like things we can do. “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).

Christ has set the example. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Corinthians 8:9).

So then, in our verses for today we have some clear direction. First, give bountifully. He sites a simple example. The farmer who sows little will reap little. The harvest is in proportion to what is sown. What harvest can you expect from your giving? You can expect an eternal harvest.

How? Let me share an exciting idea. Let's just say that you give bountifully to spread the gospel all over the world. One day you will be in heaven and you will meet people who are there because of your life. They will be there because of your witness, your prayers and your giving.

How would you like to have thousands of people make their way to you and tell you, “I'm here because you gave to get the Gospel to me. Thank you.”? What will be your reaction to that? Eternal thanksgiving and joy.

Second, he says it should be with a deliberate resolve and purpose. It must be done after we have thought and prayed it through. That way you will not live with a nagging suspicion that you were pressured into giving more than you really should have, or feel that you gave too little, that you should have given more.

We should give proper deliberation to the matter. It is too important to be done in haste or without thought.

Third, we should give cheerfully. It should make us glad to know we are doing something that pleases God. Is not the love and blessing of God worth more than anything else in this life ... better than life itself? God loveth a cheerful giver.

Develop World Vision - Acts 1:8

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The apostles did not see Jesus rise from the dead, but they did see Him ascend into heaven. It happened “while they beheld.” Naturally, the fact that He walked again among them would be proof to them of the resurrection.

But there would be no proof for them of Christ's ascension into heaven unless they saw it happen. And they did. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

He had been talking to them just before it happened. What had He said? What was on His heart during those last few minutes that He had with these eleven men whom He loved so dearly and who had walked with Him during His earthly ministry? The answer to that is vitally important to us, for it reveals His final orders to His disciples.

First of all, He told them of the coming of the Holy Spirit who would indwell them and imbue them with power. He will enable us to serve Him acceptably today and that should suffice for us. If we can live for Christ today and serve Him today, let us not be concerned with the mysteries of the times and seasons of tomorrow.

What is our service? He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." And that was it. He said it and left. He spoke and He was gone. His final charge: witness.



It never ceases to amaze me how easy it is to get sidetracked from this simple command. It seems that everything else in life can come in and crowd it out. It seems that everything else in life is easier to do. It seems that everything else in life can loom before us in great importance and capture our attention and efforts. But there it is, His final word - Witness!

Notice, He said witness unto Me. Not to a lifestyle, not to a plan, not to my pet doctrine, not to my denomination, not to my private interpretation of the Bible, not to my accomplishments for God, not to anything; but Christ.

Then He says, start where you are. Your hometown is your Jerusalem. Don't wish you were over there some place, or involved in a different occupation or profession. Your next door neighbor, your business, the people in the office, your colleagues in your profession, that's where to start. Too often we think of witnessing as something we do, when we are not where we are at.

Develop World Vision - Matthew 28:19-20

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20).

We learn from the context of these verses that the eleven were present when Jesus gave this commission. They had gone into Galilee, a long journey for just one encounter with Christ. They had been with Him several times after His resurrection in Jerusalem and would see Him there again. Why did they go all the way to Galilee? Because Christ had appointed them to do so.

Humanly speaking it seemed to be a strange and needless thing to do, but thank God they had learned to base their actions on the Word of Christ and not on their own logic and feelings. Would to God we might learn the same lesson.

When the meeting took place they worshipped but some doubted. Even among those who worship will be those who doubt. There are always the weak and wavering.

As we read further into the Book of Acts we can see that their faith grew to full assurance and their lives were used to bring great glory to God.

Then Jesus spoke. He gave these men the character of the kingdom of God. They were to be His ambassadors. Here were their instructions and credentials. He tells them of His own universal dominion over heaven and earth.

He has all power and all authority. It was given to Him by His Father.

He spoke to them as the glorified, risen Christ and He orders them to disperse among all nations.

The commission is given to you and me as well: to those who follow Christ even unto the end of the world. The message is to be given to all, and no one is to be excluded from the kingdom of God, except those who through their own prejudice, unbelief and unrepentant spirits, exclude themselves.

Through this commission Christ established His plan to bring the world to His feet as King, to establish a school where He would teach and we would learn, to raise up an army to carry on a continuing and unrelenting war against the powers of evil and darkness, and to enlist the nations to march under His banner.

Through baptism they were to be publicly identified with Christ and His people. And then the staggering promise: “Lo! I am with you, even unto the end of the world.” He is with us to see us through our difficulties and to bring blessing and fruitfulness to our service.

Our commission? Make disciples. Win people to Christ, and help them become mature, fruitful, committed followers of Christ. What a joy to be involved in eternity, in a cause worthwhile!

Grow in Christlikeness

Love - John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

Judas had just left. He went out into the night by himself, but he was not alone. Satan had entered into him and now the two of them would spend those last tragic hours together that remained to Judas on this earth. He left the fellowship of Christ and his comrades of the faith.

This, by the way, is usually the first step to a backslidden life. Some of the other disciples thought that he had gone to buy supplies or to give something to the poor. It seems that even though our Lord Jesus lived on alms Himself, He gave from his small income to the needs of others.

Jesus then spoke of His glorification. This seems strange, knowing that He would soon be exposed to the vilest disgrace, to be dishonored by the cowardice of his followers and the hatred of his enemies. But He knew that it would result in the ultimate victory over the powers of darkness and triumph over them.

He is about to take the field against the enemies of God. The hour was at hand when the battle was to come to a crisis. There had been many a skirmish, but now the decisive battle between heaven and hell was to be fought. God's honor and man's happiness must soon be won or lost forever. The trumpet had sounded that would be fatal to one of the other.

He was about to shed His blood which would bring everlasting righteousness and blessedness, and would be an inexhaustible fountain of joy and peace to all believers of all times. He would not be with them for long and they could not accompany Him on this mission.

Then He said it! He gave them a new commandment, a new basic law of His kingdom. It was new, but it was as old as the law of Moses. It had been so corrupted by tradition and cold formality that when Jesus Christ put it in this light, it was new.

Revenge and retaliation had become part of life. Self-love was on the throne. Brotherly love had become obsolete. It took its place right along side of faith: “And this is his commandment, that

we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (I John 3:23).

This new commandment had a new depth. The example was Christ Himself. How had He shown His love? He had instructed, counseled and comforted them. He had prayed with them and for them. He had defended them when accused. He had reproved them when they went astray. He had washed their feet and stayed with them when they failed.

If they did that with each other, all men would know they were Christ's disciples. So when people need help, when they differ with us, when they need forgiveness, and a hand reached out in compassion; during these times it will be known whether or not we wear this badge of discipleship, this badge of love.

Love - I John 3:18

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:18).

We were driving through the state of Iowa, calling on people who had given to the ministry of the Navigators to thank them, to bring them up to date on the progress of the work and tell them about some of the dividends of their investment.

We drove into town and located the Old Soldier's Home. A lady who had given to the work for years was living there. As we walked down the halls to her room, we saw scores of elderly people sitting around. They appeared to be gloomy and bitter. I could certainly understand why. This place was old with a cheerless atmosphere.

We knocked on the door of the lady's room and were asked to come in. There she sat, busily engaged in packaging hundreds of used Christmas cards to send to missionaries. She asked us to wait a minute until she got her hearing aid hooked up and then we had a delightful time of fellowship.

She laughed and joked with us. She challenged us to give to and pray for missionaries. It turned out that the pictures of Jesus on the cards were used as visual aids by the missionaries in the remote jungles of the world. She had made it a project over the years to send them.

She gave expression of her love not in words only, but in deeds. She had the kind of love that not only saw and felt, but acted to meet a specific need. I could see the blessing this had been to her own life.

For one thing, it had kept her mind off herself, off her surroundings, off the fact that she was alone in an Old Soldier's Home. Her husband had died from poison gas he had been exposed to in World War I. She was such a contrast to everyone around her. Her eyes were bright and her smile was catching.

She only had one complaint. Her radio had broken and she couldn't hear the missionary programs. She missed getting the prayer requests. One of the guys at Iowa State took the radio, fixed it and returned it to her. You can't let a person like that go without prayer requests. Her prayers are too valuable to the cause of Christ.

It would seem that in this self-oriented culture in which we live that there would be innumerable opportunities to demonstrate true Christian love. With deeds, not just words. With truth, not the babbling tongue of insincerity.

A lifestyle as spoken of in this verse would stand out like a neon light at midnight. And it will be used of God to direct the lost to the Savior. People perceive the true love of God when they see the One who laid down His life for them.

Humility - Philippians 2:3-4

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Do you want your life to be lived to its fullest capacity? Of course you do. Everybody does. In fact, you say, that's sort of a foolish question. I know it is, but since I've already asked one, let me ask another.

Do you want the things that you do to be done to the maximum of your capabilities? You do? OK, there are two things that you need in your life in order for that to happen: confidence and poise.

Both of these have to do with our inner confidence, a courage based on faith, a calmness of spirit. And the greatest fountain to produce those things in our lives is humility. Although we are proud by nature, humility is a virtue that can be learned.

Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” The humble person takes a good look at his God-given gifts and abilities, and then uses them for God's glory. Pride produces a tension in our lives, but humility frees us to be ourselves.

Our verse for today tells us the humble person will not selfishly compete with others. Of course not. His goal will be to glorify God, not to elevate self or put other people down. That lifestyle leads to a calmness of spirit that brings forth confidence and poise needed to function at capacity and perform to the maximum of our capabilities.

One of the great benefits of a humble spirit is that it pulls us out of ourselves. It has the positive effect of enabling us to understand and be in sympathy with the interests, ideas, and feelings of others. It can produce a self-forgetting love that gives insight into the thoughts, hopes and aspirations of those around us. Naturally we have feelings and hopes of our own, but humility

gives the power to subordinate our own things to the things of others. And what a blessing that is!

I'm sure you know of people whose lives are filled with strife and vain-glory. These are two of the most destructive forces in life. A selfish spirit will ruin and demolish the spirit of Christian love.

Naturally this teaching is contrary to the spirit of the age. Intimidation and self-assertiveness are big words today. But Jesus taught us to give ourselves, not to assert ourselves. I'm convinced that He knows more about life than all the modern, man-made ideas combined.

Lowliness of mind is, in fact, the way to fullness of life, peace of heart, and joy in the daily affairs of life.

Humility - I Peter 5:5-6

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (I Peter 5:5-6).

A uniform often signifies authority. A soldier standing guard has the authority to turn people away. The policeman directs traffic, and with a wave of his hand sends cars in another direction. But a uniform doesn't always mean authority. The waiter in his uniform in the restaurant is there to serve. The usher at the concert is there to help you find your seat. So, some uniforms mean one thing and some just the opposite.

In this passage the Apostle Peter admonishes us to be clothed with humility. I was recently told an interesting thing about the Apostle's choice of words here. When he says, “be clothed” he uses a word that is only used once in the New Testament; right here. It is the word for the slave's white apron that was tied around them to distinguish them from free men. It was the mark of servitude.

Peter tells us to gird ourselves, to serve one another, wearing the slave's garment of humility. It makes you wonder if the picture of Christ was in Peter's mind as he recalled the time His Lord girded Himself with a towel and taught his disciples, and especially Peter, that graphic lesson in humility.

So then, as our lives are adorned with the garment of humility, our service for Christ will be joyful and pleasant because of the grace of God that will flow into and through our lives. Conversely, the proud will find it tough going. God will set Himself against them. Think of the picture that the Apostle Peter paints for us as people of God: each of us wearing the garment of humility in the service of others.

The people to whom Peter was writing were suffering under persecution. He has written to them to encourage, comfort and strengthen them during this hour of trial. But here he gives them a subtle warning: In addition to all they were facing, wouldn't it be a horrible calamity to wake up one day and find that God Himself had organized all the forces of heaven against them?!

Pride, Peter says, is deadly. God resists the proud. But His grace is given to the humble. And thus they could find refuge under the mighty hand of God as He would actively take their part to shield and protect them.

As you and I read these verses it becomes obvious to us that a personal application is needed. We need to take stock, to take inventory of our lives to see if we are wearing the garments of pride or humility.

Purity - Ephesians 5:3

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Ephesians 5:3).

Today many consider purity of life an outmoded concept. It belongs to a repressive bygone era. We no longer believe in it, sort of like we no longer believe the world is flat. And, we no longer need it, like we no longer need a buggy whip.

To look back at the old days is amusing and we do so with a tolerant smile. All that puritanical behavior, all those naive notions, all of that was quaint and amusing, but we've certainly moved forward beyond those concepts.

The old ways, like the old days, are dead and gone. Today we are told there are no absolutes, that everything is relative and that we should free ourselves from the old standards and shackles.

But today's vital Bible verse is indeed vital for today. Here the Bible leaves no doubt as to what God wants for His people. We should completely avoid all immorality and covetousness because we have been set apart for God and His service.

Why does the Apostle put these two back to back? Why talk in the same breath about these two sins? Simple. Lust is a special problem to the young and covetousness is a vice of old age. One is a sin especially against ourselves and the other is a sin against our neighbor.

These are two things that should not only be avoided, but are things that should not be once named. Obviously these are deadly sins. There is a snake in the Southeast Asian countries that is called the two-step snake. If this snake bites you, you are dead by the time you take two steps. There are other snakes in that part of the world which are dangerous, but their bite is not always deadly. Some will make you sick, but they won't kill you.

In this passage the Apostle Paul warns us against even getting into the same neighborhood with either of these two sins. In another passage the command is to put these two sins to death. He

says to mortify them because “for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Colossians 3:6).

So our instruction is clear. In today's lax society, shot through with the fallacies of relativism, there are absolutes and standards which we are to live by. It is the way to joy and peace, the abundant life of Christ.

Purity - I Peter 2:11

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:11).

Picture a group of soldiers trapped behind the enemy lines in Nazi Germany during World War II. The Nazis know they are there and have given orders to shoot them on sight. No quarter will be given. They are not to be taken prisoner, they are to be searched out and destroyed.

If you can picture that, you can picture what the Apostle Peter is trying to get across in this verse. There is a war going on. On one side, on active duty, armed and deadly, are your fleshly lusts. On the other side is your spiritual nature, your soul. The fleshly lusts which lead to drunkenness, gluttony and uncleanness are at war against your soul. No quarter will be given.

These fleshly lusts are unrelenting. And our chief weapon against them is to avoid them, to abstain from them, to shun them as you would a deadly disease.

That's interesting because quite often when advice like this is given the person to whom the advice is given thinks you are trying to make life hard, barren and difficult for them. Such a narrow outlook on life! Surely you don't want me to miss out on all the fun things of life?!

The devil is a master of making evil look good. He told Eve, “do this and you will be like God.” He is still at work, propagating his lies. Here the Apostle Peter knew that even the best people need an exhortation to keep away from the worst of sins.

As strangers and pilgrims we should not involve ourselves with anything that will impede us on our journey. We are homeward bound through territory ruled by the devil, the god of this world, “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” So let us keep ourselves clean and unspotted by the world as we walk the straight and narrow path that leads to life.

Some of you know the results of going the way of the world and following the path of sin. You are robbed of your comfort of soul and peace of mind.

Misery and disgrace are the companions of a surrender to fleshly lusts. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

Honesty - Leviticus 19:11

“Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another” (Leviticus 19:11).

Last night my wife and I went shopping for a raincoat. We visited a number of stores and finally found the one that was the right size, style, color and price. After my wife made her selection I told the clerk we'd take it and wrote out a check.

The clerk took the check and my driver's license and made the proper notations. Then she made a phone call to some central security office that takes the information and gives the OK. The clerk returned and asked for my license again.

It seemed that she had to have it in her hand when she talked to the mysterious someone on the phone. After quite a long delay the clerk returned with the license, said all was in order, gave us the package and apologized for the hassle. I assured her I understood. And I did. But through it all if occurred to me that if the whole world lived by the 12 words in this verse it would be a different world altogether. These 12 words, if applied, would make life so much simpler.

This morning a letter came in the mail asking me to call the Denver office of an insurance company with regard to an accident to our car. It was smashed into the other night as it was parked in front of the house. The lady on the phone told me they would send an appraiser to look at the damage and then they would issue a check.

I asked her what I should do if the check didn't cover the cost. She said to have the body shop contact the appraiser and they would make an adjustment. Fine. Then I asked her what I was supposed to do if the check was too much, if it was more than the body shop charged us. There was this long pause and then she said in a surprised and yet subdued voice, “You know, I've never been asked that question before.”

Is honesty really the best policy? It seems that the world in general would agree in principle, but disagree in practice. In this verse the Lord forbids stealing, cheating and lying.

As Christians we abide by these commands. And yet we live in a world that is out to get us. Our house has been broken into. We've had two bikes stolen from out in front of the house.

In grade school I spent my Saturdays in the city dump collecting copper, tin and aluminum to sell to the junk dealer in Council Bluffs. I remember the shock I had when I discovered he was cheating and lying to me. I was trying to get enough money together to buy a suit to go to my Aunt's funeral, and the guy cheated me out of about half of what I should have gotten. I cried for over an hour.

What is our reaction to all this? What does the kid in school do when he has to compete for grades with kids who cheat? The answer is simple. We remember what God has said and live by it. “Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.”

Honesty - Acts 24:16

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

The enemies of Paul had banded together and sworn with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed him. But the plot became known to Paul's nephew who told Paul, who in turn had the chief captain informed about it.

When he knew Paul was a Roman citizen he banded together two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen and escorted Paul safely to Caesarea to appear before Felix the governor.

Now Felix was a rascal. He hired killers to eliminate his enemies. His cruelty and excessive, grasping covetousness knew no bounds. When Paul was trying to explain, in his defense, why he had gone to Jerusalem, not to profane the temple as his accusers had charged, but to bring large sums of money to the poor, Felix took note of that.

He assumed Paul was a rich man and kept him in prison hoping that Paul would pay him a bribe for his release. But isn't it interesting to note what Paul talked about to him all those months? “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25).

Paul did not discuss his release. He would rather save souls than his own life. Paul was not about to pay a bribe. The hopes of Felix were dashed in the character of Paul. Paul kept a pure conscience, not deceiving or flattering him. Therefore the thought of bribery or self-gain was not in his mind.

What kept the man? What was it that prompted that lifestyle? He tells us in the context of today's verse. Verse 14 says, “But this I confess unto thee that, after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). His rule of faith and practice was the Word of God, all of it, every word. It was not tradition or human reason, but the Bible.

The second thing was his belief in life after death, and that one day we will all give an account of ourselves to God. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15).

And herein Paul says, in light of these two great facts, he took special pain to maintain a clear conscience. Only as we are honest in all our dealings with both God and men can we have that. A Christian who disregards his conscience is headed for trouble.

All of us face pressure to conform to standards that are contrary to the Bible. The devil will never let up. But remember, “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”

Faith - Hebrews 11:6

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

One day there was a man walking along, talking to God and the two of them were so close and enjoyed such intimate communion that the two of them wound up their stroll together by walking through the gates of heaven! God simply removed him from the earth and transferred him to another place, his eternal home in Heaven.

The story is summarized for us in the context of today's verse: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). I'm sure what happened to that man makes him one of the truly great men of the Bible.

As we look into this we ask ourselves, “What did he do that was so remarkable? What is the testimony of his life? Is there something mentioned that we can do so our lives will really count in the kingdom of God? Yes, there is. It is told in three short simple words: he pleased God. “And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:24).

By faith he walked with God, he pleased God. And then the Bible says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him.” This is a faith that leads us to progressively and diligently persevere in our conformity to the will of God and communion with God Himself.

Why is it impossible to please God without faith? First of all, if we do not believe in God, we will not come to God. And second, we cannot walk with God apart from faith. We walk by faith, not by sight. In our natural state without Christ we have lost God's love, God's life, and God's likeness. We walk in the dark without the light of God and we walk alone without communion with Him.

Think about it. Who would choose to walk alone in the dark when he could walk with God in the light? Those who seek God have this promise: “Then you shall call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then you shall seek Me and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:12-13). The reward is that God will reveal Himself and there could be no greater reward than that.

Faith - Romans 4:20-21

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Romans 4:20-21).

This is an amazing statement. If ever a man had reason to doubt the promise of God, it was Abraham. The context tells us that against all hope he believed in hope: Against all natural hope, against all human reason, against all scientific evidence, against the history of the world.

In spite of all the evidence when God said, “Do you believe it?” He said, “I believe it!” His hope was not founded on reasonable expectation, but on the promise of God. Abraham did not let his mind dwell on the impossibilities. I'm sure this does not mean that no moment of doubt or fear ever crossed his mind.

Our mind never becomes so in tune with the mind of Christ that our ignorance never shows itself. Our mind never becomes so grounded in God that we never have misgivings. There will always be conflicts. Our faith becomes shaken and is put to great stress. But thank God, He enables us to gain the victory and conquer these evils that lurk in the hearts of men.

Our verse does not teach that Abraham was strong in himself, but, that God made him strong. He responded to the faithfulness and power of God and this brought great glory to the eternal majesty on high. By his conduct and behavior he showed the world he believed God could do what He said.

That is an important point. Our lives, not just our words, are what speak the loudest. We say that we believe God; but when the chips are down, do we? Do we stagger and fall apart, or do we stand firm and strong in faith giving glory to God? You can, you know.

God gave Abraham the power to do it and He can give it to you. He is ready, willing, and able. Believe God. Take Him at His word.

I know there are some who suppose that doubt is an evidence of humility. Nothing could be further from the truth. To doubt God's promise, His grace, mercy and love, is to dishonor His name. It is to call Him a liar, to question His Word.

Some will say, “I am not worthy,” as though their worthiness is the ground upon which the grace of God is offered. Nonsense!

If that were the case, no one could approach God. The Good News is that God accepts the unrighteous, the unworthy, the sinner.

Our wavering comes mainly from our mistrust in the power of God. Therefore we must not only believe Him to be true, but that He is able to do what He has promised.

Good Works - Galatians 6:9-10

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10).

We've all seen people who quit too soon. I remember two incidents while I was serving in the Marine Corps that dramatically illustrate this. These things happened during the time of my life when I was not a Christian. One night I was hanging around a bar with nothing to do, so I was watching a guy feed one of the one-armed bandits, our name for the slot machines.

He had put his coins in this machine and had hit nothing. Once in a while it would pay off a little bit, but the thing was taking in far more than it was giving out, which of course the thing was programmed to do. Finally, after losing most of his paycheck the man gave up in disgust.

As he walked away, another man walked up, put in a coin, and hit the jackpot! The first man had quit too soon.

The other incident was tragic. During World War II, my marine corps unit was overseas and had been island hopping for some time and one of the guys in our outfit had not heard from his wife for months. He grew more and more despondent. He became convinced she had left him for another man.

He couldn't sleep, he couldn't eat, it was on his mind day and night. Finally it happened: he went out into the jungle and put a bullet in his head.

The next day a large packet of letters arrived. They were from his wife; they had been following him all over the Pacific. It was obvious she had written faithfully but because he had been on the move so much, they missed him all along the way. They finally caught him, one day late. He had given up hope too soon.

There is a great proneness in each of us to flag in spirit and tire in our responsibilities. We should neither try to get out of, nor grow weary in our duty to God and others. Lack of encouragement along the way shouldn't cause us to quit, for if done as unto Christ, He will reward us in His time. Our hand should be extended in service and love to all people as God gives us the means and opportunity.

In addition to that, we should have a special regard to those brothers and sisters in Christ who are fellow members of the body of Christ. The Old Testament instruction is, "Withhold not good from them; to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Proverbs 3:27). Whenever God gives us an opportunity to be of help to others, He expects us to follow through according to our capacity and ability.

One of the great complaints by non-Christians is that Christians do not believe in good works. What they mean is that we think we can get to heaven by faith alone. This is true. We can. Faith in Christ is the only way. But the Bible says: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8).

Good Works - Matthew 5:16

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

Shortly before He spoke these words, Jesus had talked to the disciples about fishing for men. Now He speaks to them about two things that will make them good fishermen.

First of all He says: “You are the salt of the earth.” The prophets of old had been salt primarily to the Jewish nation. The disciples were to salt the whole earth by their lives. Salt does a silent and hidden work. It penetrates and changes the flavor of all it comes in contact with. It has a cleansing and preserving function.

Paul spoke of the savor of the knowledge of Christ and we all know how flat and tasteless life was before we came to Christ. Paul wrote, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

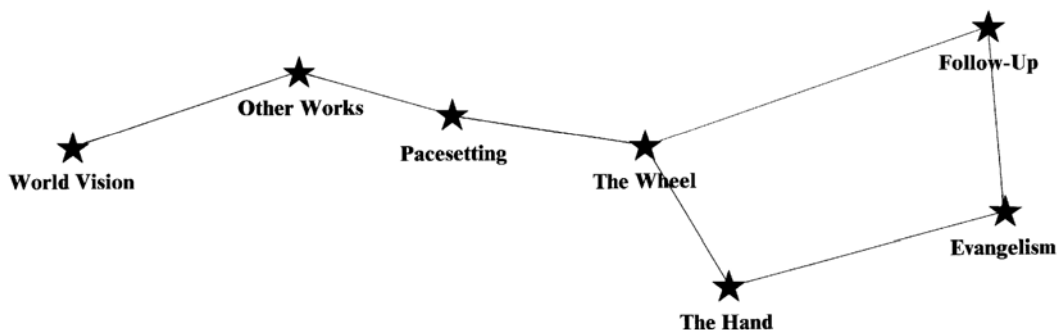
Here is an admonition to have their thoughts and affections, words, actions; all of life seasoned with the salt of grace.

All mankind around them was lying in ignorance and wickedness and they were sent from Christ that their lives and message might change those lives and make them acceptable unto God. So they were dispersed to season a world.

He then changes the image from salt to light. The world sat in darkness. They were to bring the light. Salt is hidden, but light is conspicuous. Therefore they must walk circumspectly that their lives might illuminate and give light to others; in fact, to the whole world. The disciple of Christ does not muffle himself in privacy but reaches out to others with the life of Christ.

Those about us must not only hear out good words but see our good works. The Bible says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The Big Dipper



What is the objective of it all? To glorify your Father which is in heaven. The Apostle Peter got the message because years later he taught: “That if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever” (I Peter 4:11).

The apostles observed the lives of the religious leaders around them and the contrast of their lives and the life of Jesus Christ was clear. The Pharisees sought to call attention to themselves and thus polluted all of their religious performances.

God was glorified in Christ. Like Jesus, our lives must glorify God and we must be diligent to bring others to glorify His name. The glory of God is the point where all of our words and actions meet.

Salt and light. One hidden, and the other out where all can see. A tasteless life can be enriched with the Gospel. And, the only way to dispel darkness is to turn on the light.

Hide God's Word in Your Heart

If you want to memorize Scripture, but aren't sure what to memorize or how to get started, The Navigators [*Topical Memory System*](#) is exactly what you need. It includes memory verse cards in eight different Bible versions - NIV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, NLT, NIRV and ESV. Topics include all of the basics of the Christ-centered Spirit-filled life, sharing your faith, and growing on to maturity in your walk with God.



WHAT THE TOPICAL MEMORY SYSTEM WILL DO FOR YOU:

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Your memory is good. If you don't think so, consider all the information you know by heart-your address and phone number, all the people you know by name, details about your job, facts and figures about your favorite sport or hobby, and much more. You see, your memory is pretty good after all. Anything is easy to memorize when you really have an interest in it. Includes the 72 page *Navigators Scripture Memory Course* book, verse cards of eight versions - *KJV, NIV, NASB, NKJV, NLT, NIRV, ESV*, and *The Message* - and a handy wallet to hold the cards currently being memorized. May God bless you as you fill your life with His Word!

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