

In My Time of Devotion

Volume III

By

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The Burden of Abiding

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Hetty Green was a mean-spirited, tightfisted, and very shrewd woman! Born Henrietta Howland Robinson in 1835, she is listed in *Guinness Book of World Records* as the greatest of misers. Hetty's father, Edward Mott Robinson, and her aunt Sylvia Ann Howland both died in 1865, leaving her an inheritance of nearly \$10 million (worth some \$185 million in today's dollars). Hetty immediately began investing in the financial markets, scoring her first major success after the Civil War as she bought depreciated U.S. government bonds from skittish investors. Her philosophy was simple: "Buy cheap and sell dear"--and she had an instinct for knowing when which was which!

Hetty herself lived in cheap boarding houses in Manhattan and Brooklyn, taking public transportation to her Wall Street "office"--the vault of Chemical National Bank. There she sat, clipping coupons from her municipal bonds, and diligently pouring over financial reports and forecasts. Known as "The Witch of Wall Street," Hetty's disposition was so repugnant that she had no friends and people avoided her.

Even Hetty's son was the recipient of her mean-spirited cheapness. When he injured his knee, Hetty refused to pay for a doctor and treated the injury herself. Two years later, when her son's knee still hadn't healed, Hetty dressed him in rags and pretended to be a charity case. When the doctor learned who she was and demanded payment, Hetty left his office in a rage. Several years later, the boy's leg had to be amputated.

Hetty herself lived off cold oatmeal because she was too stingy to heat it, and died of apoplexy in an argument over the virtues of skimmed milk. The year was 1916, and she left behind every penny of some \$100 million (equal to about \$1.5 billion today). Friendless and pathetic, Hetty Green was reputedly the wealthiest woman in the U.S. at that time. <http://www.brfwitness.org/Bread/witchws.htm>

The title of my message today is, "The Burden of Abiding." In John 15:7 we read these words, "If you abide in ME, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (NASV). Does this sound too good to be true? It's true but comes with a caveat. (No, God is not a genie-in-a-bottle that grants our every wish.) God answers our prayers *conditionally*. And the condition is this: We must abide in Him, obey His commandments, and pray to Him. Because many believers fail to stay put in God, keeping His word, and praying they live lives not unlike Hetty Green. Hetty had all the resources she could ever spend in a lifetime and yet chose to live in abject poverty. God is waiting to "open the windows of heaven" and bless us but we've got to ask Him. We've got to abide in Him. We've got to obey Him. We've got to keep on praying. The burden of abiding is on us and not the Lord.

This morning I'd like to share with you three reasons why we don't get answers to our prayers as we should.

- (1) For one, we do not abide with Him as we should.
- (2) Secondly, we put other “things” before Jesus who is the primary “thing”
- (3) Thirdly, we simply don’t ask.

I.

Why are there so few answers to our prayers? It is because we don’t “abide in the vine” as we should. What does it mean to “abide” in the Vine? The word “abide” is taken from the Greek word: *meno* It’s a primary verb which means to **stay put**. Now I find it very interesting that when Jesus wanted to underscore the importance of abiding in Him, He pointed to a local vineyard for illustration purposes.

I am told that a vineyard needs a lot of attention to make it fruitful. According to William Barclay in his commentary on John, “A young vine is not allowed to fruit for the first three years and each year is cut drastically back to develop and conserve its life and energy. When mature, it is pruned in December and January. It bears two kinds of branches, one that bears fruit and one that does not; and the branches that do not bear fruit are drastically pruned back, so that they will drain away none of the plant’s strength. The vine can not produce the crop of which it is capable without drastic pruning...”

If “abiding in the Vine” is necessary for answered prayers, then I think I know why many Christians stop praying. Abiding in Jesus is staying in Him—continually through good times and bad. And staying put is not something many Christians do because that requires *the spiritual discipline of letting God prune us as well as bless us*.

William Penn said, “No man is fit to command another who cannot command himself.” Tom Landry the legendary football coach of the Dallas Cowboys said it this way: “The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be.” The Bible says it this way: “...My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; (6) For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines...” Hebrews 12: 5-6 (NASV). The Gospel of John says, “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also” John 15:20 (NASV). Certainly no one likes persecution, and one will do whatever is necessary to avoid it. But, living for Jesus Christ requires thick skin because fiery darts from the enemy are inevitable. But know this though that whatever the devil throws at you for harm, God will turn it for your good if you continue to abide in Him.

II.

Why do the heavens seem as brass when we pray? It is because we put other “things” ahead of the most important “thing”—our relationship with God. Matthew 6:33 talks about seeking out God first then the other things will fall into place. John’s Gospel says that—if—we abide in Jesus and that means staying put with Him and we keep His word or do His commandments, then we may ask what we will and He will answer us. What does it mean to have his word living in us?

To have the word of God abiding in you means simply this: (1) Love God with all your heart (2) and love your fellowman as yourself. If you love God, you will do what He says to do. And what does He tell us to do? He tells us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. He tells us to love our enemies. He tells us to help one another. That means we should pray one for another and that we should help meet the physical needs of others. That means standing up for right, especially when a brother has been wronged. That means being a “doer” of the word of God and not a “hearer” only. The only way God is going to touch this world in the flesh is when we who are flesh and blood become the hands of God and begin touching the lives of others in love.

Peter T. Forsythe was right when he said, "The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master". [Warren W. Wiersbe, The Integrity Crisis, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, p. 22.](#)

Someone once said that it is not the multitude of hard duties; it is not constraint and contention that advance us in our Christian course. On the contrary, it is the yielding of our wills without restriction and without choice, to tread cheerfully every day in the path in which Providence leads us, to seek nothing, to be discouraged by nothing, to seek out duty in the present moment, to trust all else without reserve to the will and power of God.

III.

Why no answers to our prayers? Simply because we do not ask God to help us. The Bible is replete with scriptures that tell us to ask God for His help with our lives. The problem is, either we don't want to bug God with our problems or we are too independent. I am finding out as I go through the years that I'm only as *independent* as I am *dependent* on God. Does that make any sense to you? Maybe I can explain it this way: The more I surrender to God, the more I have. The more I allow God to direct my life, the more liberty I have, the more I flourish uninhibited by the enemy's vices. The key to freedom is not emancipation from God. The key is enslaving myself to Him. Like Paul, we are bond-servants to the Lord Jesus Christ forever.

How is your devotion to God?

John Kenneth Galbraith, in his autobiography, [A Life in Our Times](#), illustrates the devotion of Emily Wilson, his family's housekeeper:

It had been a tiring day, and Galbraith had asked Emily to hold all telephone calls while he took a nap. Shortly thereafter the phone rang. Lyndon Johnson was calling from the White House.

"Get me Ken Galbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson."

"He is sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him."

"Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him."

"No, Mr. President. I work for him, not you. When Galbraith called the President back, the President retorted, "Tell that woman I want her here in the White House." [Published by Houghton Mifflin, *Reader's Digest*, December, 1981.](#)

Sometimes a persons devotion to another is greater than the most powerful man in the United States—the President.

The burden of abiding in God rests with us and not with God. God will never leave or forsake us; however, we may fall out of fellowship with Him because we don't stay put in Him. Sadly we may deem the cost of serving too high, the persecution too severe, or we just grow cold and indifferent toward Him but God is not at fault. God will never leave us. The burden of abiding rests upon us.

How about you? Are you staying put? Are you doing His commandments? How's your prayer life? In short, have the heavens become brass to your cries or is God hearing you? The burden of abiding rests with you. Walking blessed is a conditional promise. If you abide in Him and allow His word to abide in you, then you may ask what you will, knowing he hears you and answers your call. Jeremiah 33:3 tells us to call on God knowing that He will answer us, showing us great and mighty things that we know not.

You don't have to walk in abject poverty like Hetty—the so called witch of Wall Street. God has all the resources you will ever need for this life and the next one to come. He's just waiting for you to ask.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

The Love of God

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

A certain medieval monk announced he would be preaching the next Sunday evening on "The Love of God." As the shadows fell and light ceased to stream through the cathedral windows, the congregation gathered inside. In the darkness, the monk lighted a candle and carried it to the crucifix. In complete silence he illumined the crown of thorns. Then he slowly moved the light toward the two wounded hands and last, the side that bore the marks of the spear that pierced it. In the hush that fell over the congregation, he blew out the candle and left the chancel. There was nothing else to say.

How does one define love? He simply points to the cross of Calvary. There is no greater illustration, no greater sermon preached, then the *passion* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son," states John 3:16. The Son so loved the Father and the world that He died. He, the innocent one, died in the place of us the guilty ones. The Bible says that even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). There is no greater love displayed than that of a man giving his life for a friend. Jesus our greatest friend not only died for us, but he did this while we were in hostility towards him. God has reconciled us to Him and that is love, the love of God displayed on a cross.

If there is one true need today it is this: we need to receive the love of God. Notice I said "receive" the love of God. His love is already displayed by the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. Our need today is not for God to love us. He loves us already. What we need desperately is to *receive* God's love personally. That simply means taking hold of that which is already available to us. *We can receive God's love.* How may we do this? We receive His love for us when we: (1.) Acknowledge it. (2.) And then walk in it.

Let's begin...

I.

God's love everywhere abounds. We really don't need to test God's love for us. As a matter of fact, it is senseless to prove God's love for us by asking Him for a sign, or asking Him to display something beyond the work of Calvary's cross. God's love exists already. His love is displayed already through the vicarious death of His Son for sinners. There is nothing more God can do to express His love for us. His love is here and now and forever it will be. We must receive it now.

His love is given as a gift. There is a difference between a *reward* and a *gift*. You may earn a reward. But you can't *earn* a gift. Gifts are given with no strings attached and no hopes of getting something in return. If a gift is given by someone who wants something in return, then it's no longer a gift but a bribe. God does not bribe the world with His love. He gives His love freely to all who ask for it. His love is not our reward for doing "good." We could never, in a million years, earn the love of God. God is indebted to no

one, not even you and me. What He gives us through His Son is freely given. (Romans 6:23)

His love is immeasurable. Author Geoffrey Bull writes, "Who can fathom the immeasurable cost to Christ of meeting all the necessity of the planned atonement?"

"He, who would purge our sins, must himself be made sin, so we could stand accepted in His righteousness.

"He, who would be our peace, must first become accursed, so we could be at one with God in Him.

"He, who would be our joy, must first be Man of Sorrows, so He could bring us singing to the courts above.

"As the Mediator, He must 'needs die' to bring us into His inheritance. As Minister of the sanctuary, He must 'needs' be touched with the feelings of our infirmities and maintain us in the house of God with His own blood. All his life on earth from the first day to the last, in all its moments, and all its places, was utterly controlled by the **need** to die in the perfect appointment of God.

"All his steps were mastered by the concept of 'the tree'" (*God Holds The Key* Hodder and Stoughton Limited London 1959)

His love pardons sin completely if we receive His love in forgiveness. There is an old story told about a man sentenced to die for the murder of an associate. The brother of the condemned who himself laid the State under obligation to him went and pleaded the cause of his condemned brother. Although the case was one of premeditated murder and though there was no question about this fact, for the sake of the brother who had the state indebted to him they consented to pardon his brother.

With the pardon in hand, he went to free his brother. At this junction the story takes on a strange twist. Instead of presenting the pardon to his brother immediately, he asked him during the course of conversation, "If you had your pardon, supposing you had it now, and you were free to walk out of here, what would you do?"

With a gleam of malice and hatred in his eye the condemned brother said, "I would find the principal witness and I would kill him. Then I would kill the judge."

Hearing those words, the brother said nothing of the pardon and left the cell. As he walked away, he tore up the petition of pardon and destroyed it.

As the story ends, the listener is presented with an age old dilemma. Did the brother do the right thing by denying the pardon? Should he have ignored the hate in his brother for his accusers and presented his pardon to him without question? Or did his love for what is right justify turning his back on his blood kin?

The great orator of years past G. Campbell Morgan said these words regarding the paradox presented. He likened it to our pardon from sin “Pardon for a man who is persisting in sin is impossible. It would continue the disorder, and make it infinitely worse. God will pardon you even though you cannot undo your past, pardon you without any merit on your part; but if in your heart you still cling to sin, He cannot, dare not, pardon you. And that is why the condition of receiving remission is repentance toward God. And repentance does not mean that a man quits sinning, it means that he is willing to quit if but the power be given him to do it. And that is the condition. You have committed sin. Are you willing to cease, if only the past may be dealt with, and power given to you by which you shall sin no more? That is repentance.” (Pardon by the Cross, G. Campbell Morgan, <http://www.jesuschristonly.com/illustrations/death.html>)

The love of God is for all who acknowledge it, for all who receive it. It’s not enough to know that God is a God of Love. It is imperative that we move beyond that knowledge to experiencing its saving grace. God love delivers from sin the one who will receive it by faith. And as we receive His love by faith, we must walk in it.

II.

What does it mean to **walk** in the love of God? *It means that we keep on acknowledging His love for us daily.* Don’t for a minute think that God’s love stops embracing you because you don’t feel something tingling inside you. In spite of feeling and sensations, God’s love embraces you. And it never stops embracing you. God’s love will never leave you but in some sense you may walk away from it. How is this done? It is done by allowing rebellion or even indifference to fill your heart towards God. Sin breaks **fellowship** with God, although your **relationship** with Him is secured in Christ (John 10). Repentance towards God keeps the fellowship alive and active. The verb “walking” gives us the sense of action or of doing something. We cannot remain passive towards God’s love. We must actively maintain our fellowship with Him by allowing the Holy Spirit to search our hearts daily of sins and roots of bitterness towards our neighbor and tell the Spirit of God that He is free to cleanse us and restore us wholly in fellowship.

What does it mean to **walk** in the Love of God? *It means that we touch others with His love.* Our **vertical** fellowship with God is that we love Him with all of our heart, soul, and mind. Our **horizontal** fellowship with our fellowman displays the love of God in our hearts. The vertical beam crossed by the horizontal is a picture of the cross of Calvary. Through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ we are restored in relationship to the Father above. And by living for Christ daily, taking up the cross daily and choosing to love our fellowman, we maintain a viable relationship to our fellowman—across the board no matter his kindred, tribe, or nation. The cross of Jesus Christ is central to all humanity.

I am told that there is a little piece of silk in the museum of Springfield, Illinois that could not be bought for any amount of money. Why the value attached to it? It is because of its significance. That little bit of silk is all covered with blood. It was once a part of a dress worn by a beautiful girl, who sat by Abraham Lincoln when he was shot; and it was that

beautiful girl who took his head in her lap, as a mother would receive the head of a baby, and it was that girl who held him while he bled his life out. The State of Illinois purchased that dress, and cut out this piece of silk covered with the blood of the great statesman, emancipator of an enslaved race, and the man who in the program of God became a cohesive force in the salvation of this great nation.

If a state would do that for the blood of a man, what should the world do for the Blood of Jesus with all its emancipating power, and all its cohesiveness for a scattered race? For, if the race of man, without regard to nationality or color or condition of life, is ever to be united and held, it will be by the cohesiveness of that Blood. (F.E. Marsh, Illustrated Bible Study Outlines, <http://elbourne.org/sermons/index.mv?illustration+52>)

Conclusion:

God's love is real, but we've got to *receive* it. How is it received? We receive it as we acknowledge it—take hold of it daily by faith. The Bible says that faith is the substance or *title deed* of things not seen with the physical eye (Hebrews 11:1). The noun "faith" becomes a verb or state of action when we *trust* God and His love for us, although we might not feel it. God is not into "sensationalism" for an effect. He is simply trustworthy for the sake of who He is—God Almighty. We must walk in God's love. We walk in His love for us as we acknowledge Him daily and reach out to our fellowman in need. There are really only two things we must do as Christians: love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and, secondly, love our fellowman as ourselves.

God's love for us is like the love a mother has for her baby. She has already sacrificed much of her life and personal ambitions to the life of the child before it is ever born, but after the birth the sacrifice continues. Each time the baby cries the mother is disturbed from much needed sleep. Hours are spent giving often, regular feedings. Messes are cleaned up. Clothes, diapers, sheets, and so forth are in the washing machine continually. She hovers over the little baby and gives it a protected environment. Sometimes she is so tired she thinks she will collapse. She loves the baby with a love that she cannot describe in words. But do you know something? That newborn baby does not love her! That's right... that baby doesn't love anybody really... unless it would be itself. But she begins to work on the problem right away. She cuddles, hugs, kisses, rocks, and coos over the baby. She gives it constant attention. And then one day, she is greatly rewarded when she hears it say, "Mommy, I love you." My friends that short, little sentence makes all the tiring effort seem worthwhile.

In like fashion God wins our hearts by His constant love. We may receive His great love for us without any strings attached by simply acknowledging it and walking in it daily. His love everywhere abounds.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon because He loves us so.

Pastor T.

Seen in the unseen...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

“He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” Psalm 147:4-5

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Colossians 1:16-17

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.” Matthew 6:28 (KJV)

“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:31 (KJV)

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” I Peter 5:7 (KJV)

The following words are taken from Bill Bryson’s book entitled, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. The book is a national bestseller and published by Broadway Books of New York, 2003. The paperback edition I own cost \$16.95 at Barnes & Nobles Book Store in Tulsa, OK. It is one of the most informative books I’ve read in years. I do recommend reading this book.

While reading these excerpts think about the Awesome God we serve. He is beyond the vast expanse of space; He is beneath the smallest of the small in the subatomic world where the laws of thermodynamics seem to break down. But remember, the Bible declares that Jesus is the one who holds all things together, especially in the science of quantum mechanics. Pastor T.

Page 3 of Bryson’s Introduction: “Survival on Earth is a surprisingly tricky business. Of the billions and billions of species of living thing that have existed since the dawn of time, most—99.99 percent—are no longer around. Life on Earth, you see, is not only brief but dismayingly tenuous. It is a curious feature of our existence that we come from a planet that is very good at promoting life but even better at extinguishing it.”

Page 16: “Rees maintains that six numbers in particular govern our universe, and that if any of these values were changed even very slightly things could not be as they are. For example, for the universe to exist as it does requires that hydrogen be converted to helium in a precise but comparatively stately manner—specifically, in a way that converts seven one-thousandths of its mass to energy. Lower that value very slightly—from 0.007 percent to 0.006 percent, say—and no transformation could take place: the universe would consist of hydrogen and nothing else. Raise the value very slightly—to 0.008 percent—and bonding would be so wildly prolific that the hydrogen would long since

have been exhausted. In either case, with the slightest tweaking of the numbers the universe as we know and need it would not be here.”

Page 24: “So the solar system is really quite enormous. By the time we reach Pluto, we have come so far that the Sun—our dear, warm, skin-tanning, life-giving Sun—has shrunk to the size of a pinhead. It is little more than a bright star. In such a lonely void you can begin to understand how even the most significant objects—Pluto’s moon, for example—have escaped attention. In this respect, Pluto has hardly been alone. Until the *Voyager* expeditions, Neptune was thought to have two moons; *Voyager* found six more. When I was a boy, the solar system was thought to contain thirty moons. The total now is ‘at least ninety,’ about a third of which have been found in just the last ten years.”

God is big enough to handle your cares. He is small enough to concern Himself with your most hideous shortcomings. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to the Father’s plan of redemption for wretched humanity. Jesus is the life-giving force that holds my life together. When things seem to unravel and leap beyond my control, Jesus keeps me from unraveling by His power. He is my rock and my salvation. I am anchored in Him and cannot drift beyond His watchful eye.

Page 27: “Still, statistically the probability that there are other thinking beings out there is good. Nobody knows how many stars there are in the Milky Way—estimates range from 100 billion or so to perhaps 400 billion—and the Milky Way is just one of 140 billion or so other galaxies, many of them even larger than ours. In the 1960s, a professor at Cornell named Frank Drake, excited by such whopping numbers, worked out a famous equation designed to calculate the chances of advanced life in the cosmos based on a series of diminishing probabilities.

“Under Drake’s equation you divide the number of stars in a selected portion of the universe by the number of stars that are likely to have planetary systems; divide that by the number of planetary systems that could theoretically support life; divide that by the number on which life, having arisen, advances to a state of intelligence; and so on. At each such division, the number shrinks colossally—yet even with the most conservative inputs the number of advanced civilizations just in the Milky Way always works out to be somewhere in the millions.”

To be continued...

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

You may bank this...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

I'll get right to the point. The point is this: Before God Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth warned us by saying, "Thou shalt not..." God told us, in essence, that we should "Do" something. And what should we do? Take dominion. We were created to have "dominion" over fish, fowl, land animal, and ground. That speaks of a promised prosperity.

If I need 20 fish to sell at market in order to buy bread for my kids, I don't need to ask the fish if they mind being used for such. I go to the lake and *take* the fish. I prepare them for market and make my transaction. What does this goofy illustration highlight? It highlights the craziness associated with belief systems that say it's wrong to kill animals for food. It tells us that a belief system that tries to glorify poverty over prosperity is off center. It tells us plainly, before God told us anything about rules and regulations, that we are to claim, possess, and take charge over the earth. Period.

Do you rule over your circumstances in life?

The scriptures I am referring to are Genesis 1:26-27. Go ahead, get your Bible out and look these up. Stop telling people how miserable, wretched, and poor you are and start taking dominion over your circumstances in Jesus' name! How would Jesus address a negative circumstance? He would speak to it and command it to align with the Word of God. We are created in His likeness and image; therefore, we should do the same thing in speaking the Word.

The next thing God tells us to do before He says anything about "Thou shalt not..." He tells us to be fruitful and multiply. Go ahead and look it up. It is found in Genesis 1:28. So you want to have a family do you? Then start speaking in that regard. Claim what God says about your womb that is barren. God says be fruitful and increase. It is the will of God; it is His desire to bless you with a godly mate and children. If you need to, remind yourself of this promise often. The devil will try to keep you ignorant of it. But the Word of God is telling you to go for it.

I just felt like sharing this truth with you. Maybe you can put it to good use.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.
Pastor T.

Mine eyes...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Late in 1861, Union troops were singing their John Brown song as they marched through Washington toward the South. As you might not know before the Civil War (1861-1865) music of America was mostly hymns, minstrel songs, and the music of Europe. We didn't have many popular songs of our own. So the old tunes were adopted as camp songs to inspire the soldiers on both sides. One popular tune of the Union was the revival hymn, "Say Brothers, Will We Meet You Over on the Other Shore?" The soldiers had their own words for that one; they called it, "John Brown's Body."

On one occasion as Union soldiers marched through the city streets of the Union's capital, Julia Ward Howe saw the formation movement and heard the tune—"John Brown's Body." Inspired by the occasion Julia wrote down a poem, and sent it to the *Atlantic Monthly*. It was received well by the publication, and the editor sent her a check for \$4.00. An Ohio chaplain memorized the words of the poem and taught them to his regiment. From this humble beginning, the poem spread like Sherman's fires across Georgia, and Union troops everywhere were singing it as they marched to battle. It is said that President Lincoln heard the song at a war rally in Washington and exclaimed, "Sing it again" as tears rolled down his cheeks.¹

And guess what? We've been singing it ever since. That song that fetched four dollars from the *Atlantic Monthly* is none other than the song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Keep the faith. Stay the course. The coming of the Glory of the Lord is imminent.

Pastor T.

¹ Derric Johnson, *The Wonder of America* (Tulsa: 1999), pp. 44-45.

The work of your hands, there's more to it

Terry Dashner (www.fcba.org)

Do you have difficulty seeing the bigger picture in life? You know, keeping focus on what is future in your life and not what you're experiencing currently. In other words, do you become easily discouraged because your hope cannot advance beyond the "thing-at-hand" to see the "thing" it can become?

Recently I read a 1982 sermon by John Piper entitled, "Take Courage: You build more than you see." The sermon is the story of the prophet Haggai in the Old Testament. Haggai, the contemporary of Zechariah, was commissioned by God to give four prophetic utterances to the post-exilic people of Israel.

Israel after 70 years in captivity in what is now modern day Iraq was allowed by Cyrus the Great to return to their ancient homeland in Judea. Having enthusiastically started the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem the Israelites became weary and stopped the construction because they were taunted by the surrounding people. God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to return and finish what they started. The Bible says that the Israelites received the words of Haggai and finished the temple construction.

Either it was some time in that period of construction or at a time when it was completed that the people despaired over its finished product because it was far from the grandeur of Solomon's temple. They literally despaired to the point of weeping because they could not look beyond the "thing-at-hand" and see the glory to come. Because of the despair, Haggai tells them to take courage and trust God with what He is going to do through their government, religion, and people throughout the course of human history.

I think it would be good at this junction to insert some of the words of John Piper's sermon noted above. "...I think anybody who has ever undertaken a work for the cause of Christ has felt that kind of discouragement: the sense that you work and work and the product seems so paltry. You pour yourself into a thing week after week and month after month and the fruit is so minimal. Then you look back in history or across town and see the grand achievement of others and your temple seems so trivial. And you get discouraged and are tempted to quit and put away your aspirations and drop your dreams and put your feet up in front of the television and coast. Who wants to devote his life to a second-rate temple?

"The second argument God uses to encourage those who think their work only produces paltry results is found in verses 6-9: 'For thus says the Lord of hosts: once again in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake the nations so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.' In other words, take courage, work and fear not, because you build more than you see. All you see is a paltry

temple. But God promises to take your work, fill it with his glory and make your labors with a million times more than you ever imagined.

“How was this prophecy fulfilled? Like most prophecies, it was fulfilled in stages and the final fulfillment is yet to come. By the time Christ had begun his ministry Herod had rebuilt Zerubbabel's temple so that it was truly magnificent. The temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, but Jesus had said in John 2:19-20, ‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up ... But he spoke of the temple of his body.’ Jesus said a direct continuity between the Old Testament temple and himself: once God met his people in the temple, now God meets us in Jesus Christ. Some interpreters believe a glorious temple will again be built in Jerusalem and stand through the millennium as Christ rules on earth (cf. Ezekiel 41ff; 2 Thess. 2:4). That may be, but the final state of eternity is described in Revelation 21:22. When the new Jerusalem descends John says, "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

“The point is this: God had a purpose for a Temple. The Jews of Haggai's day could not see it all and what they could see seemed so paltry. So God came to them with a word of promise: Take courage. You build more than you see. The heavens and the earth and sea and land and all treasures are mine. I will take the fruit of your little labor and make it glorious beyond measure, no matter how trivial and paltry it may seem to you now.

“There is a principle here that applies to you and me: God takes small, imperfect things and builds them into a habitation for his glory. O, how we should take courage in our little spheres of influence! And is this not the message of Advent and Christmas? What more appropriate word could God have said to Mary as Jesus was growing up: Take courage, young mother, you build more than you see. And so it is with every one of us. Nothing you do is a trifle if you do it in the name of God. He will shake heaven and earth to fill your labor with splendor. Take courage, you build more than you see.”

<http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper82/112882m.htm>

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Continue the work God has given you until Jesus comes again.

Pastor T.

Go ahead and cast away your cares...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Psalm 55:22 “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” KJV

I Peter 5:7 “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” KJV

Matthew 6:25-34 “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? [26](#) Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? [27](#) Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? [28](#) And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin [29](#) And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30](#) Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? [31](#) Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? [32](#) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. [33](#) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. [34](#) Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” KJV

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. [7](#) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. [8](#) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

After reading these scriptures, it is obvious that God cares. And that means He cares for you, especially.

“Grace is God drawing sinners closer and closer to him. How does God in grace [accomplish] this purpose? Not by shielding us from assault by the work, the flesh, and the devil, nor by protecting us from burdensome and frustrating circumstance, not yet by shielding us from troubles created by our own temperament and psychology, but rather by exposing us to all these things, so as to overwhelm us with a sense of our own inadequacy, and to drive us to cling to him more closely.

“...When we walk along a clear road feeling fine, and someone takes our arm to help us, likely we would impatiently shake him off; but when we are caught in rough country in

the dark, with a storm brewing and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we would thankfully lean on him. And God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing, so that we may learn to lean on him thankfully. Therefore he takes steps to drive us out of self-confidence to trust in himself, to -- in the classic scriptural phrase for the secret of the godly man's life -- 'wait on the Lord.'" [James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.](#)

God wants you and your baggage. Don't try to clean yourself up before you ask God for help. Come to Him as you are. He cares for you.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

Change is constant...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Someone once said that the only *constant* in life is *change*. We live in a time when change comes more frequently than ever before. No other time in history has experienced the super-sonic-speeds of change known to this generation. Daily something changes before our very eyes. And the change is not always received well. Many times we would rather hold to the status quo and let change pass us by, but it confronts us on every hand and forces us to go with the flow.

One change that affects the church is culture clash. Our present culture in America with its traditional values is being hammered by a postmodern culture that will no longer take our message at face value. It will no longer listen to us but will reserve their "hearing" for a time when a relationship of trust has been established. The clichés of the past generation won't work for this one. It's no longer enough to say, "The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it." To reach the new cultures of indifference to the Christian way, we must live out the love of Jesus Christ to others. (Talk is cheap. Our walk in Christ is everything.)

In light of these changing times, I want to ask you one question. Do you ever stop to think that God has placed you in this time of unprecedented change intentionally? That's right. You aren't where you are by an accident of a Sovereign God. Evidently you have the right stuff to win this generation to God or you would have been placed in another time--like a 1,000 year Dark Age when the only thing of any great significance that changed was the farm plow.

God knows what He is doing. He has placed you here and now. So, get to work loving the unlovable into the Kingdom of God. It will change your life too.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.
Pastor T

A Christmas Blessing

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Jesus was born during a time when the Jews were anticipating a great and mighty king that would come and deliver them from the oppression of the Romans. They expected Him to reign in Jerusalem and establish His kingdom on this earth. Yet, our Savior did not come as imagined in the minds of first century Jews. He did not come as a mighty king. He came as an innocent baby boy, born in a manger in Bethlehem, to die for us. He died so that we might be forgiven of our sins. He came to make a way for us to live with Him eternally.

Jimmy, an eight-year old, was one of the best students in his Sunday school class. One day, the teacher asked her students to draw a picture of the baby Jesus. Jimmy worked and worked and came up with a picture of a modern jet airplane with four people inside. The teacher couldn't figure it out although she thought maybe it was a modern rendering of the Christmas story. She asked, "Jimmy, this is a nice picture, but what is it?" "Why, that's Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus on their flight into Egypt." "But there are four people in there. Who is the fourth one?" "Why, that's Pontius the Pilate!" [Dr. Paul Chappell]

Even as this little boy wasn't sure of all the facts of Christ's earthly ministry, many have misunderstood why Jesus came to a lowly manger in Bethlehem. Revelation 19:16 reads, "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." He was born a meek and lowly child to identify with the meek and lowly of this world. When He returns to this earth, He will come as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to rule and reign over his eternal Kingdom. Our flight to heaven won't be on a jet plane, nor will it terminate in Egypt. We're going via the Rapture, past the moon, sun and stars to a new heaven and new earth!

H.G.Wells, a noted historian, when asked who had left the most permanent impression on history, replied that if one judged a person's greatness by historical standards then Jesus stands first. Over 2000 years ago Jesus entered the human race through a small community called the Jews. He was a member of a poor family and a minority group and resided in one in the smallest countries in the world. He lived only 33 years, 3 of which were used for public ministry. Yet people all over the world still remember Him. Why? Because He is the most important person ever born on this planet. Even atheists are forced to agree to that.

He came into the world dividing time and history into two parts labeled AD and BC. He never wrote a book, yet more books have been written about Him than any one else. The nearest thing we have is His biography-the Gospels. The Gospels are translated in whole or in part in more than 1500 languages. He never led an army, but millions had laid down their lives for His cause.

Jesus had only a small number of disciples. But they went into the world and turned it upside down. They went into unexplored parts of the world to share the Gospel with people who lived not much better than animals. Today Christianity is over 2.1 billion world wide. Consider this...

(One Solitary Life...an anonymous poem)

Nearly two thousand years ago in an obscure village, a child was born of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village where He worked as a carpenter until He was thirty. Then for three years He became an itinerant preacher.

This man never went to college or seminary. He never wrote a book. He never held a public office. He never had a family nor owned a home. He never put His foot inside a big city nor traveled even 200 miles from His birthplace. And though He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness, throngs of people followed Him. He had no credentials but Himself.

While He was still young, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His followers ran away. He was turned over to His enemies and sentenced to death on a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – the simple coat He had worn. His body was laid in a borrowed grave provided by a compassionate friend.

But three days later this Man arose from the dead – living proof that He was, as He had claimed, the Savior whom God had sent, the Incarnate Son of God.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the central figure of the human race. On our calendars His birth divides history into two eras. One day of every week is set aside in remembrance of Him. And our two most important holidays celebrate His birth and resurrection. On church steeples around the world, His cross has become the symbol of victory over sin and death.

This one Man's life has furnished the theme for more songs, books, poems and paintings than any other person or event in history. Thousands of colleges, hospitals, orphanages and other institutions have been founded in honor of this One who gave His life for us.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the governments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned have not changed the course of history as much as this One Solitary Life.

Jesus is the reason for the season. Let us keep that in our hearts and minds this Christmas season. You and I have what we have because Jesus gave it to us. This is a debt we owe Him but could never repay, so just receive it. I pray that your Christmas is merry and Christ centered. In Jesus' name: Merry Christmas!

Pastor T.

History of Ephesus and its first church

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

At the time of John's writing (Revelation), Ephesus was an important seaport city of the Roman province of Asia. Today, the site is stranded several miles from the sea on the edge of a swampy alluvial plain, and the former harbor is marked by a reed-bed.¹

Ephesus was famous for its [Temple](#) of Artemis (Diana in Latin), which is one of the seven wonders of the world (Acts [19](#)).²

The important place which Artemis held in the city, both religiously and commercially, can be seen by the riot which ensued in reaction to Paul's ministry (Acts [19:24-41](#)). The ancient temple of the great goddess identified with Artemis stood less than a mile outside the walls of the city.⁶

Ephesus also participated in the [imperial cult](#) where temples were built to Claudius, Hadrian, and Severus.⁷ Magic was a thriving art at Ephesus. Scripture records the value of books burned by those who practiced magic as "fifty thousand *pieces* of silver" (Acts [19:19](#)).⁸

Ephesus also had a reputation as a seat of learning. Paul is recorded as having taught at one such established school, the *School of Tyrannus* (Acts [19:9](#)).

Ephesus was probably listed as the first city of the seven to receive the letter from John due to its proximity to Patmos. Ephesus lay at the intersection of two ancient major overland routes: the coastal road that ran north through Smyrna and Pergamum to Troas (near ancient Troy); and the western route to Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and regions of Phrygia and beyond. Ephesus can also be viewed as the starting-point of a type of postal route . . . running north to Pergamum and southwest through Sardis to Laodicea.¹⁰

Although Paul ministered extensively at Ephesus: "The first arrival of the gospel in Ephesus is unrecorded. According to Acts [2:9](#) Jews resident in Asia were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And we are told of 'disciples' in Ephesus before Paul's arrival, though they are represented as imperfectly instructed [Acts [19:1ff](#); Acts [18:24ff](#)]." ¹¹

Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts [18:19-28](#)) and on his third missionary journey taught there for a period of almost three years (Acts [20:31](#)). Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church from there.¹² It was at Ephesus that Apollos, a disciple of John the Baptist, was instructed by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts [18:24-26](#)). When returning from his third missionary

journey to Jerusalem, Paul passed by Ephesus, but stopped in Miletus. From there, he sent for and met with the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts [20:17](#)).

The church at Ephesus had plural eldership well in advance of John's writing this letter (which adds to the difficulties attending the identification of the angel of the church. Paul asked Timothy to remain in Ephesus in his absence (1Ti. [1:3](#)) and wrote his epistle to the Ephesian church in A.D. 60-62 (after his third missionary journey, A.D. 53-57) which was delivered by Tychicus (Eph. [6:21](#)).

John the Apostle in Ephesus

Tradition holds that the John left Jerusalem prior to its destruction and in about A.D. 66 relocated to Ephesus which was his main place of ministry during the closing years of his life. If Mary were still alive, she would have undoubtedly traveled with him (John [19:27](#)).

The word from Revelation to Ephesus

The titles which Jesus assumes in each letter (the seven messages to the seven churches of Revelation) are primarily derived from Revelation [1:12-18+](#) and are tailored to the message which attends each letter. Here, the Ephesian church has ***lost its first love*** (Rev. [2:4+](#)). Jesus reminds them that it is He who is the protector of the stars--they are held in His right hand, secure and in a position of favor (John [10:27-30](#)). He has not left them, but they have *left Him* (Deu. [31:6, 8](#); Jos. [1:5](#); Mtt. [28:20](#); Heb. [13:5](#)).

The Ephesian church had worked hard and born a consistent load of service. The Christian life, though full of joy, is also attended by much labor and hardship (2Cor. [11:27](#)). Continual labor requires continual patience. Believers are to persevere and not grow weary (Isa. [40:31](#); Gal. [6:9](#); 2Th. [3:13](#); Heb. [12:3](#)). Those who die in the Tribulation are said to obtain rest from their labors and their works follow them (Rev. [14:13+](#)).

The Ephesian church did not bear those who were evil. This must refer to the Scriptural application of church discipline to protect the gathering from those who were not truly of them (Mtt. [18:17](#); 1Cor. [5:5](#); 1Ti. [6:3-5](#)):

The sphere in which the Angel of Ephesus had the chief opportunity of manifesting this holy intolerance of evil-doers was, no doubt, that of Church-discipline, separating off from fellowship with the faithful those who named the name of Christ, yet would not depart from iniquity (2Ti. [2:19](#)).²

A letter written by [Ignatius](#) (A.D. 98-117) mentions this commendable characteristic of the Ephesian church:

But I have learned that certain people . . . have passed your way with evil doctrine, but you did not allow them to sow it among you. You covered up your ears in order to avoid receiving the things being sown by them -- Ignatius, *The Letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians*³

The Ephesian church was diligent in evaluating those who ministered in their midst.

Words of caution to all churches today...

All things are to be tested by the measure of God's Word (Isa. [8:20](#)) and the fruit which is produced (Mtt. [7:16](#)). This is especially true of those things which are *claimed to be of the Spirit of God*, but are not (1Th. [5:2](#); 1Ti. [4:1](#); 1Jn. [4:1](#); Rev. [2:20+](#)). The most serious threats to the Christian assembly *come from within* (Acts [20:29-31](#); 1Ti. [1:3-4](#)).

Peter warned of false teachers who would pattern themselves after the false prophets of the [OT](#):

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. (2Pe. [2:1](#))

When the church accepts these false teachers, and fails to confront their error, then "the way of truth will be blasphemed." A key attribute of such teachers is their *deception*--appearing to be what they are not. They are all the more effective in their convincing zeal since *they themselves are deceived* (2Ti. [3:13](#)).

It is a lamentable fact in our time that the Church seems unwilling to test its own. Application of the guidelines set forth by the [NT](#) writers is seen as judgmental or quenching the Spirit. Yet it was the Spirit Himself who [inspired](#) the writers who urge us through the pages of Scripture to proactively guard doctrine! The NT makes plain how essential this testing is to the health of the assemblies. Shouldn't we expect that Satan will concentrate his greatest efforts at the very 'ground zero' of God's work upon the earth--within the local Christian assembly? We cannot

say that we have not been warned: "test the spirits, whether they are of God" (1Jn. [4:1](#))!

Paul had previously warned the Ephesian church about the need to *watch for* false teachers: For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (Acts [20:29-31](#))

Paul mentioned such false apostles when writing to the church at Corinth and was not hesitant to cut off their "ministry":

But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms

himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2Cor. [11:12-15](#))

A key attribute of those who are not what they appear to be is their *self proclamation*. In the church of Thyatira, it was [Jezebel](#) who *called herself* a prophetess (Rev. [2:20+](#)). Paul says that they *transform themselves*, patterning their deceit after Satan who transforms himself into an angel of light. This transformation would be entirely effective if the church did not have the Word of God and gifts of spiritual discernment to expose such imposters (1Cor. [12:10](#)). Spiritual discernment is necessary because the natural mind is ineffective in the spiritual realm where the seduction takes place (Mtt. [24:24](#); Mark [13:22](#); 2Th. [2:9-11](#); 1Ti. [4:1](#)). The power of seduction by demonic spirits may be assessed by noting how easily deceiving spirits convince the kings of the earth to participate in the height of folly: going to war *against God* (Rev. [16:13-14+](#))!

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (Acts [20:29-31](#))

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The warning to Ephesus

[Kinhvsw](#) [Kinēsō] (from which we get the word kinetic) can also mean to "shake," "move," "provoke," "stir." This may be indicating not only that the lampstand will be *removed*, but that it will be *disturbed* in such a way as to disperse its membership elsewhere to form new churches (Mtt. [10:23](#); Acts [8:4](#)). "The seat of the Church has been changed, but the Church itself survives."⁵ Even if a church remained physically present at Ephesus, if its membership failed to return to their first love, then the essential Christian testimony of the church would be curtailed. "Without genuine Christians remaining, it is impossible for a church to produce light."⁶

Those with illumination bear greater responsibility for bearing fruit. When we fail to bear fruit, God raises up others in our stead (Mtt. [21:43](#); Mark [12:9](#); Luke [20:16](#)). This would be the destiny of the Ephesian church if it did not repent.

Gibbon (*Decline and Fall*, c. lxiv.) writes like one who almost believed that the threatenings and promises of God did fulfill themselves in history:

In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplored the fall of the first Angel, the extinction of the first candlestick, of the Revelations; the desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana or the church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes; Sardis is reduced to a miserable village; the God of Mahomet, without a rival or a son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus, and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy, or courage. . . . Among the Greek colonies and Churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect--a column in a

scene of ruins,--a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same.⁷

The lampstand at Ephesus was indeed removed. "I have before me a picture of the Ephesus of today--a ruined archway, a Moslem dwelling, and a forbidding castle, 'midst desolate hills. No lampstand for Christ where once Paul labored three years, night and day with tears!"⁸

The appearance of this phrase is an indication of John's apostolic authorship. "It is characteristic of John, occurring once in the Gospel, six times in the First Epistle, sixteen times in the book of Revelation, and elsewhere only Luke [11:22](#); Rom. [3:4](#); [12:21](#)." ⁴ See [Authorship](#). See [Who is the Overcomer?](#)

Tree of life

The tree of life originally stood in the Garden of Eden (Gen. [2:9](#)). By partaking of its fruit, man had eternal life. But through the Fall, man lost access to the tree (Gen. [3:22-24](#)). The tree of life is a common motif for righteousness and wisdom in Scripture (Ps. [1:3](#); Pr. [3:18](#); [11:30](#); [13:12](#); [15:4](#)) for it is by righteousness and wisdom that life is lived to the full. For this reason, the Jews referred to the Word of God as the "tree of life". " [Torah scrolls are] written on parchment, sewn together, rolled onto wooden rollers called eytz chayeem (tree of life), and read regularly in the synagogue."⁵

During the present age, while man is barred from the tree of life, God has provided *another tree of life*: the cross of Jesus Christ. Those who place their trust in His atoning work upon the cross *have* eternal life (John [3:14-16](#)).⁶ Even though every man has been bitten by the Serpent (Gen. [3:15](#)), by merely looking upon this tree in faith, he will be healed (Num. [21:9](#)).

In the eternal state, believers will once again obtain full access to the tree of life (Rev. [22:2+](#), [14+](#)). The promise made to the overcomer is an essential element of salvation. In the eternal state, man will still be *dependent* upon God for access to the tree of life (Rev. [22:2+](#)) because *independence from God* is sin.

Paradise of God

Significantly, the church which had lost its first love was given the promise of access to a tree which was in the midst of the garden wherein God and Adam used to have sweet fellowship (Gen. [3:8](#)). This is the very essence of the *first love* which the Ephesians had left.

Paradise "[Paravdeiso](#)" [Paradeisos] was originally a Persian word, denoting an enclosed garden, especially a royal park."⁷ "Among the Persians a grand enclosure or preserve, hunting ground, park, shady and well watered, in which wild animals,

were kept for the hunt; it was enclosed by walls and furnished with towers for the hunters."⁸ Although Paradise was initially associated with the Garden of God (Gen. [2:8](#); [13:10](#); Isa. [51:3](#); Eze. [28:13](#); [31:5](#)), the meaning of the term has changed with time: " We may thus trace [paravdeiso](#)" [paradeisos] passing through a series of meanings, each one higher than the last; from any garden of delight, which is its first meaning, it comes to be predominantly applied to the Garden of Eden; then to the resting-place of separate souls in joy and felicity; and lastly, to the very heaven itself."⁹ "What was originally a garden of delight has taken on the connotation of the new heavens and the new earth."¹⁰

Prior to the cross, paradise was a compartment within Hades (Luke [16:22-23](#)). At His crucifixion, Jesus told the repentant thief, "today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke [23:43](#)). The location of paradise after the victory of Jesus on the cross moved to heaven, for Paul was " caught **up** into Paradise" [emphasis added] where he heard inexpressible words (2Cor. [12:4](#)). Essentially, the term describes the abode of righteous men upon death:

It is a term describing the abode of the righteous ones, no matter where that above may be at any point in time.... from Adam until the Ascension of Jesus, Paradise was in Abraham's Bosom. From the Ascension of Jesus until the end of the Millennium, Paradise is in Heaven. Then, after the Millennium and for all eternity, Paradise will be in the New Jerusalem on the new earth.¹¹

Dr A T Pierson (quoted by Lang) pointed out that these promises at the end of each letter follow an historical order. The tree of life refers back to Eden; the second death to the fall; the hidden manna to the manna in the desert; the white stone to the engraved stones on the high priest's shoulder and breastplate; the rod of iron to Moses holding the rod of God for the defeat of Amalek (Ex 17:8); the white raiment to the garments of the priests; the pillar in the temple to those in the temple of Solomon; and the sitting on the throne to Solomon's reign in glory and peace.

The rewards for those who overcome involve a share in Christ himself:

They will eat of the tree of life watered by the river of life whose source is Christ (2:7).

1. Will receive the hidden manna which is Christ the true bread which comes down from heaven (2:17).
2. Will share in Christ's authority over the nations (2:26).
3. Will walk with Christ dressed in white (3:4).
4. Will write on him my new name (3:12).

5. Will sit with Christ on his throne (3:21).

There is much information in the bible about the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was founded by Paul where he reasoned with the Jews, he left Priscilla and Aquila there (Acts 18:19). Paul came back to Ephesus and found some disciples who had not received the Holy Spirit, they had only been baptised into John's baptism, when they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 19:1-7). Paul spoke in the synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8) and then in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for 2 years (Acts 19:9-10). Then there was a disturbance because of the fertility goddess Artemis who brought the Ephesians wealth through making silver images of her (Acts 19:23), they were afraid that through Paul's preaching about Christ they would lose business. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). He said good-bye to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus before going to Jerusalem (Acts 20:17-38) where he warned them that savage wolves will come in among them (Acts 20:29).

He also wrote to the Ephesians a long letter from which it is clear that they were a mature church. It is also thought that the apostle John and Mary, Jesus mother, settled at Ephesus. Some two-and-a-half centuries after Paul preached in Ephesus, the city hall was converted into a church and later used by the Council of Ephesus, which in 431 AD formally accepted the teaching that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine (Hill).

As we will see in the next two chapters, Yeshua has separate messages for seven congregations. These seven messages are sent through seven angelic messengers. This can be interpreted to mean that the messages have a more universal significance, as the number "seven" is often used in Hebrew literature to be an incomplete structure that represents a greater number or deeper meaning.

Paul called upon these gentiles at Ephesus to walk as they were called:

Ephesians 4:1 - *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*

This "walk" (*halakha*), of the Ephesians is within the ONE FAITH that they were now part of (i.e., Ephesians 2:11-13), which is the faith of Israel as given in the Torah:

Ephesians 4:4-5 - *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, **one faith**, one baptism,*

Note the elements that Paul brings forth from the above verses:

1. One body - Israel (see 3:6 above)
2. One Spirit - i.e., the Shekinah, abiding with Israel, and bride to the Messiah

3. One Lord - the Messiah, Lord of Israel, and groom to the Shekinah
4. One faith - based in the Torah of Israel given by God
5. One baptism - immersion into the faith of Israel with its Messiah (baptism = to take the likeness of)

Yeshua Himself made clear that there is one faith, based in the Torah of Israel, and that this did not change to any degree:

John 4:22 - *Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.*

Matthew 5:17-21 - *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Paul, in his Romans letter, made clear that faith in Yeshua did not do away with the Torah (the basis of the faith of Israel), but confirmed it:

Romans 3:31 - *Do we then make void the Torah through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the Torah.*

This faith of Israel, which the Ephesian gentiles were now part of, is what they were to hold to. This was to be based solidly in Torah so that they would not be "tossed to and from" in any non-Torah doctrine. This is what Paul wanted them to be aware of:

In other words, what we have at Ephesus is the early stage of a non-Hebrew (and eventually anti-Torah) faith, much like what we see today in Christianity, which presents itself as the superior replacement to the faith of Israel.

For example, in an appendix to a popular version of the King James Bible, regarding the book of Hebrews, it says:

*"With carefully reasoned arguments the author showed that Christianity is superior to Judaism," ... "Christianity is the perfect religion."*³

Yeshua's warning of "being cut off," is similar to what Paul warned another gentile group in Rome concerning their relationship to Israel:

Romans 11:17-24 - *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, **if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.** And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

What is of particular historical significance is the punishment these predominantly gentile communities of believers received when they abandoned their "first love" and developed the various branches of early gentile Christianity. Quite a number of gentile Christian sects evolved in the early centuries. As early as the year 187, the Christian Bishop Irenaeus counted twenty different varieties of Christianity. By the year 384, Epiphanius counted eighty.⁵ (Thus falling into the trap Paul warned about in Ephesians 4:14.)

Because they no longer considered themselves part of Judaism, these Christian groups opened themselves up to "legal persecution" from the Roman Empire. This occurred because new religions were not tolerated by the Romans. Rome, going back to the original Caesar, had given Judaism the right to exist as a *collegia*, within the Empire, due to it being an ancient religion, predating the Romans.⁶

As early as the beginning of the second century, we see legal cases against "Christians," such as one documented around the year 112, by Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia (in modern-day Turkey). Pliny noted that those identifying themselves as "Christians" were distinguishing themselves from Judaism, thus giving him the legal right to execute them for nothing more than being part of an illegal group.⁷

Had these gentiles remained faithful to the covenants of Israel, they would have at least avoided legal prosecution on the part of the Romans. Historically, they were therefore not persecuted by the Roman government, for the "sake of the Messiah," but for walking away from Him, as he warns here in His comments to the assembly at Ephesus, and as Paul warned those in Roman chapter 11.

One can only speculate what would have happened to Torah-based faith in Yeshua over the centuries if this had not happened.

- Homosexuality, adultery and fornication are sins against the decreed male/female relationship, which is an image of Tipheret-Malkut (i.e., the chaste bride and bridegroom). To sin in any of these ways in the physical realm is to sin against the Shekinah (or Ruach haKodesh) in the spiritual realm.

Paul made allusion to this relationship in one of his letters:

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 - *Have ye not known that your bodies are members of Messiah? having taken, then, the members of the Messiah, shall I make them members of an harlot? let it be not! have ye not known that he who is joined to the harlot is one body? `for they shall be -- saith He -- the two for one flesh.' And he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit; flee the whoredom; every sin -- whatever a man may commit -- is without the body, and he who is committing whoredom, against his own body does sin. Have ye not known that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price; glorify, then, God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Thyatira, a church at compromise

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Back in 1931, Irving Thalberg of MGM decided he wanted to buy the film rights to *Tarzan*, written by Edgar Rice Burroughs. So Thalberg sent Sam Marx to negotiate with Burroughs, telling Marx not to spend more than \$100,000—an extraordinarily large sum in those days. Marx contacted Burroughs and asked how much he wanted for the film rights. "\$100, 000," said Burroughs. When Marx offered him \$25,000, Burroughs walked out of the meeting. However, Marx and Burroughs continued to negotiate throughout the summer. Burroughs eventually settled for \$40,000. After signing the contract, Burroughs admitted that he had wanted MGM and Thalberg to make the picture so badly, they could have had it for nothing if they had insisted. "Mr. Burroughs," replied Marx, "If you had held out, you would have gotten \$100,000!"

To every believer who reads this I would say, "Stay the course. Go the distance. For those who stand on God's Word without compromise, one day they will be rewarded richly." Imagine for a moment—where the local church would be today if it stood in solidarity with other denominations, resisting compromise to the world's standards. Someone once said that *compromise is simply changing the question to fit the answer*. Compromising with the world's way of doing things is nothing more than adapting Biblical truths to fit the world's way. For example, some churches have accepted and are even actively promoting same sex marriage. How can a Bible believing church condone this? They condone it by saying that all "love" is of God and therefore a marriage of two males or two females can't be wrong because it is based on love. I demur. God is love, but not all "love" is of God. A "love" that a man has for his wife and his paramour cannot be God's love. A "love" that a person has for idols of wood or stone is not a substitute for a love for God. And the list goes on.

Compromise with the world is not a 21st Century invention by the church. Compromise was a problem for the early church, especially the church of Thyatira. Listen to the words spoken to Thyatira in Revelation 2:18-29:

These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like beaten brass. I know your works—I mean your love and your loyalty and your service and your steadfast endurance; and I know that your last works are more than your first.

But I hold it against you that you make no effort to deal with the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and whose misleading teaching causes my servants to commit fornication and to eat meat offered to idols. I have given her a time within which to repent and she refuses to repent from her fornication. Behold, I am going to cast her into a

bed and I am going to cast her paramours into great affliction, unless they repent from her deeds; and I will slay her children with death; and all the Churches will know that I am he who searches the inmost desires and thoughts of a man's being; and I will give to each one of you what your works deserve.

To the rest of you in Thyatira, to all those who do not hold this teaching, to such as have not known the depths of Satan, as they call them, I say this—I am not going to put any other burden on you. All I say is, hold on to what you have until I come.

I will give to him who overcomes, and who keeps my works to the end, authority over the Gentiles; and he will smite them with a rod of iron; like vessels of pottery they will be smashed; for this is the authority that I have received from my Father; and I will give him the morning star.

Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.²

When considering the seven letters written to the seven churches in Asia Minor, the longest of the seven letters is written to the least important of the seven cities. Nonetheless, the problem which faced Thyatira and the danger which threatened it were those which were universally involved in the position of the Christians in Asia.³

Here's some background on the city of Thyatira:

Thyatira was situated in a valley that connected two other valleys. It had no natural fortification at all and although at this time a Roman garrison was stationed there, their aim was not to defend Thyatira, but to delay the invaders long enough for Pergamum, the capital up the road to be prepared for the coming attack. Thyatira was dispensable in the economy of the day.

Though not easily fortified, Thyatira was on a major trade route and was well known for its trade guilds - there were carpenters, dyers, sellers of goods, tanners, weavers, tent makers, etc all making a living from their trade. You might remember Lydia in Philippi. She was a trader of purple

² William Barclay *The Revelation of John Volume one Revised Edition* (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia 1976), p 100.

³ *Ibid.* p 101.

cloth and came from Thyatira. She was infact one of Paul's first converts when he visited Thyatira on his second missionary journey (Acts 16).

Now these guilds were somewhat similar to our trade unions 15 to 20 years ago. It was very difficult for the blue collar tradesmen and women to make a living unless they were a part of one of these guilds. They differed from trade unions, however, in that they were linked with the worship of other gods. Each guild had its particular guardian god and as a member, you would be expected to attend all its functions and participate in its activities which included offerings, feasts and often immoral behavior. The members of the church in Thyatira were torn between making a living on the one hand which meant having to be part of the guilds and on the other hand staying faithful to Christ and his standards.

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As with all the other churches that we have studied in Revelation, Christ's letter to this church has four elements: (1) Christ's introduction (2) Church commendations (3) Church condemnations and the (4) Promise to those who overcome. Let's look at these one by one:

CHRIST'S INTRODUCTION (verse 18)

As always, Christ reveals himself in a special way to the church being addressed. We have seen in the past that the description used is always relevant to the situation they are in. Here, Christ's description of himself has 2 parts.

“Son of God”

In verse 18 he describes himself as the “Son of God.” This is the only place in Revelation that this title is given to Christ, though it is used often through out the gospels. It comes straight out of Psalm 2:7:

“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.” (7) I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father. (8) Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. (9) You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

The context of this Psalm is that kings and rulers of the earth plot against the Lord and his anointed. This is nothing short of Satanic rebellion against God. However, God promises that God's Son has authority over the world. God will make all nations His inheritance and the ends of the earth His possession. When the church in Thyatira heard the name “Son of God”, they would be reminded that Christ has

ultimate authority in a world which is hostile to him. Matt 28:18 Christ states “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” *Christ has authority whether we like it or not.*

Second part of introduction:

“...eyes like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze”

The second part of his revelation is a description about his appearance. We are told in verse 18 that He has “eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze.” The image is again straight out of the Old Testament - from Daniel 10:6. Here Daniel sees a vision of a man who tells him of kings and nations that would terrorize and persecute the people of God. But Daniel was not to fear - why? Because although kings and people of the earth are hostile to God and his church, Christ is sovereign - even over the hostile rulers.

The images of flaming eyes also reminds us that God’s eyes are penetrating, seeing everything, knowing everything.

Jeremiah 16:17 - “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes.”

Hebrews 4:13 – “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Christ sees everything and here his eyes are flaming - He is angry with what he sees.

His feet are also of bronze. Bronze was the hardest metal known at that time and is often used of to speak of judgment. Christ was therefore angry - so angry that he was preparing for judgment?

COMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHURCH (verse 19)

Christ says that this church was to be commended for they:

- 1) were a loving church
- 2) they were a serving church
- 3) they were a faithful church
- 4) they were a growing church - their patience and works were more now than ever.

Sounds good doesn’t it. Sounds like an ideal church - what could Jesus have been angry with? What could have prompted the use of the name “Son of God” and the images of fiery eyes and feet of bronze?

The answer is in the next verse (verse 20) “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

CONDEMNATION OF THE CHURCH (verses 20-23)

Despite the growth and apparent faithfulness, the love and ministry seen in the church, they were being misled doctrinally. There was a woman who Jesus called Jezebel who was calling herself a prophetess, but was misleading the people.

A farmer once walked into a restaurant and asked the owner if he could use a million frog legs. Desirous of putting frog legs on the menu more frequently, the owner asked the farmer where he could get so many. The farmer said, "My pond is overflowing with them. Their croaking is driving me up the wall and I'd love to get rid of them." The owner told the farmer to bring him as many as he could. A week later the farmer returned with an embarrassed look on his face. He held up two scrawny frogs and said, "I was wrong about a million frog legs. These two frogs were making the entire racket. I never knew two frogs could cause so much noise." *Just one person was corrupting the whole church in Thyatira - but one is all that it takes.*

What is a prophet? The simplest definition of a prophet is one who speaks for God. This can either be **foretelling** the future or **forth telling** the Word of God. A true prophet has authority because his or her words come from God either through direct revelation or straight from the Word of God. A false prophet has mislaid authority which does not come from God. This so called prophetess in Thyatira was not a prophet at all. Why? Because what she was proclaiming as coming from God was contrary to God's word.

Like an apple with a worm in it this church looked good on the outside, but inside it was rotten. We often look at other churches and say - God is really doing something in their midst - they are such a loving church. Look at all the people flocking to their services. They are reaching out to the community and really making an impact. People are changing. But you can't judge a book by a cover We rush to hear speakers of big churches thinking that they must have it all together because their church is growing. We soak up everything they say and accept it because they must know what they are talking about. Thyatira, was a growing church - a thriving church, filled with love and faithfulness - but they were rotten on the inside because they were following wrong doctrine.

What was this wrong doctrine that this prophetess was teaching? We read in verse 20 that it led people to practice fornication and eat food sacrificed to idols - both of which were clearly condemned in the Word of God. It is likely that this prophetess was teaching that it was alright to be part of the trade guilds - "After all," she'd say "you need to make a living and God doesn't expect you to starve. Don't be worried, - God has told me its alright - It is alright to go and be a part of the guilds and participate in the immoral and idolatrous worship that occurs in their meetings - after all we live by grace and are not under the law any more." And who were the rest of the church to disagree with what was being said - they weren't prophets were they?

Further indication of what was going on is indicated in the fact that Christ called her Jezebel. The name Jezebel conjures up thoughts of very seductive women using their flair to entice men into their beds. The real Jezebel was nothing like this. She was a queen of Israel at the time Elijah was a prophet. She was a wicked woman and was the pagan daughter of a pagan king and had no business being married to Ahab, the King of Israel. When she became queen, she turned first the heart of her husband, then the hearts of Israel to the worship of Baal. Her first official act, as recorded in Scripture, was to kill the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 17:4). She was no seductress - her ways were blatantly against God. She did away with God's spiritual leaders and replaced them with the prophets of Baal. She was definitely not to be trifled with. While Elijah was happy to face up to 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mt Carmel, you might remember that he fled when he heard Jezebel was after him.

Jezebel replaced God's word as given through his appointed prophets with a counterfeit one given by the prophets of Baal and Asherah. She sought to replace the worship of God completely with the worship of other gods and introduced idolatry once again to the people of Israel.

Do you see the similarities here between the Jezebel of Old Testament times and the prophetess in Thyatira? ***Both tried to replace God's authoritative word with a poor substitute. How often do we do a similar thing?*** Again, we should never water down the Word of God to accommodate the world's philosophies.

There are some other similarities between the two. Both were given opportunity to repent. Jezebel had Elijah proclaiming the truth about God, but she refused to listen. The prophetess of Thyatira also was given the chance to repent, but she refused. God is a gracious God, even when it comes to such vile offenders who do so much damage.

Another similarity exists in their judgments. Jezebel of the Old Testament was condemned by God - listen to it in 1 Kings 22:23-24:

“And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: ‘Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’ ‘Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.’”

She was sentenced to death and those who followed her and her husband were also condemned to die. (Compare the judgments pronounced on the Jezebel of Thyatira stated in Revelation 2:22-23 to Jezebel of the Old Testament.)

Revelation 2: 22-23, “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. (23) “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to

your works.”

The prophetess is condemned to sickness - some interpret this as death. Her children - those who grew up following this doctrine - would eventually find punishment and death because they were following a false gospel. Serious stuff isn't it?

How can we tell whether or not a teaching or a doctrine is from God or from a Jezebel? Here are some things we can look for:

First Jezebel doctrines teach that something evil can be good. Isn't it amazing how a religion that promotes violence by the sword—radical Islam—is defended by many as being a “peace loving” religion. (President Bush referred to Islam as a “peace loving” religion after 9-11 to hopefully discourage a backlash of violence against the attack on the World Trade Center.) Paul warned the Elders of Ephesus against such false teaching when he said in Acts the 20th chapter, (29) “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

Secondly, the doctrine of Jezebel hates God's true Word. Jezebel hated Elijah and tried to destroy all the true prophets who faithfully spoke God's word. Christians who are bound by Jezebel's doctrine similarly have no regard for God's word. They would rather *experience* God rather than study His word. They would rather feel God than follow Him by faith. They would rather be entertained than sit under Biblical teaching. They are unmoved by proclamations of God's judgment and denounce any such teaching as gloom and doom. Ahab said about Micaiah, God's faithful prophet in 1Kings 22:8 “I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad.” Jezebel prophets speak only good things - peace and prosperity (Jeremiah 23:14-17). They never speak judgment. ***It is unbalanced, unbiblical and wrong.***

Thirdly, the doctrine of Jezebel deceives people. People under this doctrine think they are right and everyone else is wrong. Ahab, when he was trying to determine whether to go to war against Ramoth Gilead consulted God's prophet Micaiah and all the other prophets in the land who were led by Zedekiah. We read what Zedekiah said in 1 Kings 22:11 - “This is what the LORD says: ‘With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.’” And all the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. “Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious,” they said, “for the LORD will give it into the king's hand.”

These false prophets said their words were from God. Did you hear their words ... “This is what the Lord says” and Ahab believed them completely. But they were wrong as Ahab found out. Ahab was killed and his army routed at Ramoth Gilead. Ahab should have listened to Micaiah.

PROMISES TO THOSE THAT OVERCOME (verses 24-29)

Let's wrap this up. We have seen that Christ has condemned the false prophets and those that follow them. But for those who overcome, God has some promises: Revelation 2: 24, "Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Conclusion:

To the overcomer, those who don't get misled by false teaching, God promises two things:

(1) He says that he will give them authority over the nations. This is significant because remember the introduction and description of Christ as the Son of Man and having traits of the Man Daniel saw. Both images remind us that God has given Christ ultimate authority over all nations and now he says that he will give this authority to the church and we will reign with him. We don't have to be worried about the world as it presses in on us. ***We have authority over it.***

2) He says that he will give them the Morning Star. The Morning Star is Venus, the brightest star in the sky and the precursor to the new day. In Revelation 22:16, the morning star is identified as Christ himself. The overcomers are therefore promised Christ himself. This will be the greatest reward of all.

So where are we? Are we "overcomers" or are we part of Jezebel's following. Do we stand against compromise with the world or do follow after the world's seductive voice? Do we search the scriptures to confirm everything that we hear? ***God expects us to be students of the word.***

Some years ago, musicians noted that errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled out of tune as they went about their work. It was talked about and someone suggested that it was because the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and they were discordant. The boys did not know there was anything wrong with the peals, and quite unconsciously they had copied their pitch.

We tend to copy the people with whom we associate; we borrow thoughts from the books we read and the programs to which we listen, almost without knowing it. God has given us His Word which is the absolute pitch of life and living. If we

learn to sing by it, we shall easily detect the false in all of the music of the world.
<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=73735&page=4>

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming for saints who have not been deceived by Satan's lies.

Pastor T.

God is Faithful

Psalm 89:1 "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

One of the most tragic events during the Reagan Presidency was the terrorists' bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, in which hundreds of Americans were murdered as they slept.

A few days after the tragedy, Marine Corps Commandant Paul Kelly visited some of the wounded marines in a Frankfurt, Germany, hospital. Among them was Corporal Jeffrey Lee Nashton, who had been severely wounded in the incident. Nashton had so many tubes running in and out of his body that a witness said he looked more like a machine than a man; yet he survived.

As Kelly neared him, Nashton, struggling to move and racked with pain, motioned for a piece of paper and a pen. He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the Commandant. On the slip of paper were but two words: *Semper Fi* -the Latin motto of the Marines meaning "forever faithful." With those two simple words Nashton spoke for the millions of Americans who have sacrificed body, limb, and their lives for their country -- those who have remained faithful. [J. Dobson & Gary Bauer, *Children at Risk*, Word, 1990, pp. 187-188.](#)

"Forever faithful" is the stuff God is made of. You might say that He is filled to the brim and running over with it. It is His nature, His way, His conduct, His speech and every other thing about Him. The universe declares His faithfulness, but what about you? Do you declare God's faithfulness? *This morning I'd like to share with you three of God's attributes that guarantee His faithfulness to us:*

- For one, His **Sovereignty** guarantees His faithfulness to you and me.
- Secondly, His **Steadfastness** guarantees His faithfulness to us.
- And thirdly, His **Truthfulness** guarantees His faithfulness to His people.

Let's begin...

I.

God is faithful to us, and His Sovereignty guarantees it.

A dad stood in the cellar looking up at his son standing at the edge of a trap door. He called up, "I'm right here son, go ahead jump down to me."

The boy hesitated, in uncertain fear. "I can't, dad; I can't see you." Quickly came the dad's reply, "I know you can't, but I see you!" This short anecdote illustrates beautifully the Sovereignty of God. We may not see our Father, but He sees us always. His hand may be hidden from our view, but we still trust Him that He holds us with His firm grip.

God created the world and all that is in it. He sustains it. And He is bringing it to a satisfactory conclusion. Because he is God, he has the absolute right to work his will. But sometimes sovereignty is misunderstood to mean that God forces his will on us; therefore, we are not free to choose for ourselves. This is false. God's Sovereignty includes the free choices of human beings. What makes God's sovereignty effective is that His will is ultimately done—sometimes along with, sometimes in spite of our free choices.

Think of it like this: I served aboard the *USS Guadalcanal* LPH-7 in 1974 and again in 1976. In 1976 I boarded ship to participate in a NATO cruise. While at sea, I was free to move about the ship with regards to my assignment, using my free time in the evenings to watch a movie in the hanger deck or just hang out with friends in sickbay. (I was a Navy Corpsman—medic). Although I was free to move about the ship daily, I was never free to call on the skipper for a chat about the way he was conducting his ship. I was never free to tell him that we could make much better time if we'd just quit zig-zagging and steam a straight path. No! I was on his ship and bound by his orders. He was responsible to get me from point A to point B. It was my responsibility to follow his orders, trusting that we would eventually get to where we were going.

We as believers are like assigned passengers on a ship. We have the freedom to make choices and live life within the parameters of God's Sovereignty. God has determined where you and I will end up at the end of life's journey. We simply trust Him. He will get us from point A to point B safely in spite of what circumstances dictate from time-to-time. God is greater, more powerful, than mere circumstances of life. You may bank on that.

Since God is Sovereign—in control of all things in heaven and earth—we may trust His faithfulness to us. Because He controls all things pertaining to life, He can get us through every trial, adversity, and difficulty in life. And He never fails to do this. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy **faithfulness** to all generations." [Psalm 89:1-3](#)

II.

God is faithful, and His steadfastness guarantees it so. James 1:17, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (NASB ©1995).

God is not fickle, and He's certainly not a mere shadow of reality. He is steady like a rock, turning neither to the right nor to the left. He has no mood swings. He never ceases

to be good. And He is always sincere, moved by His heart and not by a whim. *God is steadfast!*

C. S. Lewis felt that time was one of the greatest pieces of evidence for the existence of heaven. Mankind seems constantly surprised by the passing of time. We see someone we haven't seen since they were a child and we're astonished, genuinely so, at their growth and development. It's almost as if we expected them to remain the same. Parents are always taken aback when their child gets married, remarking, "It seems like only yesterday when they were only this big." Why is this?

Lewis contends that humans shocked by the passage of time is about as ridiculous as a fish constantly startled by the presence of water. That is, unless that fish was really meant for land. So it is with us; we are meant for a timeless existence. We know it, deep down. We aren't supposed to get old, wrinkles and watch people die. Why would this seem unjust unless we instinctively knew that it wasn't our destiny?

Heaven, as it is described in the Bible is not full of celestial virgins, or one's own planet; it is a timeless, eternal, never changing existence with the Creator. Before the fall of man (see: Adam & Eve), life on earth was quite similar. Afterward, we became bound by time, human limitations, death and a severe separation from God. Nevertheless, eternity is still in our hearts. God has put eternity in our hearts. This is what the Bible says.

Because God is unchanging, He is faithful to us always. If God was faithful in answering our prayers yesterday, then He will be faithful to answer them again tomorrow. God never turns away from the reality of His existence. He exists throughout time and eternity as a faithful God. Amen.

III.

God is faithful and His truthfulness guarantees it. Are you convinced that God can not lie to you? It isn't His nature to lie to you or me. He is total reality. If God were not truth incarnate, then His creation could hold him in contempt and stand in judgment over Him. Why is this? It is because judgment seeks the truth. We can not judge God because there is no possibility of falsehood existing in Him. But we may be judged by God because we are capable of falsehoods and impure motives. Again, we can not judge God because there are no lies in Him. He is forever truth and justice.

Consider this: When you need a 24' ladder to rescue your family from a burning building and all you have is an 18' ladder ... well, you're short, deadly short! You might as well have no ladder!

Any truth which isn't ALL truth is NOT truth at all!

The Lord Jesus made it clear He was "the way, the TRUTH and the life" [John 14:6a]. He said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" [John 8:32] and

greatly encouraged His followers with these words, “If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” [36]

Jesus also said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Luke quoted Peter as saying, “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” [Acts 4:12]

The “ladder of success” the world is climbing is infinitely short of that needed to find what they are really after and really need. What does man need ultimately? He needs God who is true to His word and faithful to “perform” it. God is faithful and His attributes declare it so.

Conclusion:

The attributes of God guarantee His faithfulness to us. The Bible declares that He will never leave us nor forsake us. His Sovereignty declares His faithfulness. His Steadfastness declares it. And His truth declares His faithfulness. What about you? Do you declare God’s faithfulness? Although times may be uncertain and the days may linger long, God is not unpredictable in His care for us. He is forever faithful. He is the epitome of *Semper Fidelis*.

Missionary statesman Hudson Taylor had complete trust in God’s faithfulness. In his journal he wrote: Our heavenly Father is a very experienced One. He knows very well that His children wake up with a good appetite every morning ... He sustained 3 million Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years. We do not expect He will send 3 million missionaries to China; but if He did, He would have ample means to sustain them all ... Depend on it, God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply. *Our Daily Bread*, May 16, 1992

Let God faithfully care for you. And you keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

Take the first step first

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

“God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil to exist.”
St. Augustine: *Enchiridion*, XXVII, 421

Christian Apologists make the argument that *evil* exists because *good* exists. In other words, there is no way to know what is “good” unless there is a possibility for “bad.” In the same vein not only is there a heaven, but there is also a hell. It takes a *positive* and a *negative* charge to complete an electrical circuit. One item completes the other. Justice is not served perfectly without a negative consequence for doing evil and a positive consequence for doing good. Makes sense to me, how about you?

If you are a parent, you know that children do not seek out good all the time. Sometimes children find themselves in bad situations, simply because of poor choices; therefore, it behooves a parent to teach his son or daughter to make good choices and to refrain from making poor choices because of the negative consequences attached. A child must be taught that there is a right way and there is a wrong way. To do right is to excel and find reward. To do wrong is to reap the whirl winds of disaster. Yes, there are *absolutes* in this life and the life to come.

Truth is an absolute. I can affirm that $2+2=4$. Or I can reject the truth of that equation, but I can not do away with it. Just because I reject truth does not abolish it. Truth is truth whether I agree with it or not. Consider this. When Moses was given the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai and later returned to the people at the base of the mountain, he broke the stone tablets on which the laws of God were written because the people were worshiping a golden calf idol. Later God would re-write His laws on another stone tablet and give to Moses. Notice the imagery in this story. Moses could break the laws of God but he could not abolish them. The laws were indelibly inscribed on the tablets by the very finger of God.

You and I have the potential of going astray, breaking God’s commandments. And the consequences are not good. But neither you nor I can abolish the truth of His laws simply because we want to ignore them—just be left alone by them. If I stick my head in the sand when evil comes, I can avoid it, right? No, wrong! Ignoring trouble doesn’t do away with it. You must face the situation at hand and deal with it.

Not only is God Holy, requiring perfect justice of His creation, but He is also Love. And because He loves you and me so much, He has provided a way for you and me to escape His wrath against evil. One day God will vindicate the good and condemn the bad. This is called judgment. But you and I don’t have

to stand in His judgment of condemnation. You and I may receive a pass. Our pass from judgment comes by receiving Jesus Christ God's Son by faith. You see Jesus took our place in condemnation when He died on the cross. When you and I call upon Jesus to save us from our sins, we are identifying with his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. In other words, Jesus took our sin so that we wouldn't have to die in sin. When we call upon the Lord to save us, the Holy Spirit of God re-creates our spirit and makes us one with Him. It is a supernatural work and can be accomplished by God only.

There is another dimension to His gracious salvation. It is called forgiveness. As a believer who sometimes slips and rebels against God, I can call upon God to forgive me because the blood of Jesus is in heaven still at work, still cleansing me when I sin. This keeps me on track. This keeps me on the straight and narrow.

So where do you stand? Without Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you will reap the negative consequences of your sin; however, salvation and reward come to those who put their faith and trust in Him. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life...

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming again to judge and condemn evil and reward the good. And that's the truth.

Pastor T.

Forever far away...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

"As far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12) KJV

Have you ever wondered why the Bible declares that our sins are as far removed as the *east* is from the *west* and not as far removed as the *south* is from the *north*? It has to do with polarity.

As you may recall from the physical science course you took as a freshman or sophomore in high school, our earth rotates on its axis tilted about 23 and one-half degrees. And because it rotates on its axis daily while revolving around the sun annually, it has *north* and *south* poles. If I travel *north* to the North Pole, at some point I will no longer travel north but *south* to the South Pole and then *north* from the South Pole.

This is not true of *east* and *west*. On our planet there are no points at *east* and *west*. If I travel *east*, I will never reach the *west*. Likewise I will never reach the *east* by traveling *west* on this planet.

Interesting, is it not? The Bible declared the infinity of east and west long before science could verify it. The Bible declared that we indeed rotate on an axis that goes from south to north, again, long before science could verify it. (Keep in mind that the Bible declared the earth to be round long before Christopher Columbus sailed to the new world. This is found in Isaiah 40:22.) In Jesus Christ our transgressions are as far removed as infinity and not just from one pole to the next. This speaks volumes about God's love for us. He has wiped away everything that keeps us from a living fellowship with Him through faith in the Blood of His only Begotten Son.

Yes, God cares for you that much. His love is infinite.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming again for everyone covered in His Blood.

Pastor T.

It's the foundation

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Have you heard about the postmodern generation? If you haven't, you might be interested in learning a few things about it because it's clashing against traditional culture with tremendous force. Why should you be interested, you ask? If you're a parent, grandparent, teacher, business person, or a communicator of the traditional values of Christianity, you need to know about *postmodernism*.

According to Graham Johnston and author of the book entitled *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, he writes:

In the end, ten distinctives would emerge as the hallmarks of postmodern people:

1. They're reacting to modernity and all its tenets.
2. They reject objective truth.
3. They're skeptical and suspicious of authority.
4. They're like missing persons in search of a self and identity.
5. They've blurred morality and are into whatever's expedient.
6. They continue to search for the transcendent.
7. They're living in a media world unlike any other.
8. They'll engage in the knowing smirk.
9. They're on a quest for community.
10. They live in a very material world.⁴

And how did they come to these outrageous conclusions? Postmodernity comes with a generation that has grown up in broken homes, been lied to by politicians, and deceived by church and community leaders. The church makes bold claims but rarely delivers on its own message of love, reconciliation, and compassion.⁵

Consequences associated with abandonment of trust...

In dissolving traditional cornerstones of society such as the family unit through divorce or abandonment, a whirl wind of consequences comes to visit the next generation. Remove the nucleus from society (family) and society eventually implodes because the foundation is broken. No matter how pretty the building, it's destined to fall if the foundation is of poor quality and construction.

The importance of a foundation is alluded to in a speech that author and lecturer Ravi Zacharia made at the Wexner Center for the Performing Arts on Ohio State University campus some time ago. Zacharia was exposing the inconsistencies of the postmodern philosophy. Johnston quotes Zacharia, 'Puzzlement only intensifies when you enter the building, for inside you encounter stairways that go

⁴ Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 2006), 26.

⁵ Ibid, 55.

nowhere, pillars that hang from the ceiling without touching the floor, and angled surfaces configured to create a sense of vertigo. The architect, we are duly informed, designed this building to reflect life itself—senseless and incoherent—and the ‘capriciousness of the rules that organize the built world.’ When the rationale was explained to me, I had just one question: *Did he do the same with the foundation*’ [emphasis mine].

Ravi Zacharias reveals both the duplicity of postmodernity and the means by which one can begin to engage postmodern listeners: by exposing the assumption, beliefs, and rationale upon which postmodernity rests. His conclusion, ‘The point of engagement must come through common ground that even the postmodernist assumes in disbelieving something.’⁶

So what kind of foundation should be laid to pastor the postmodern generation? It should be a foundation of *trust*. Clichés and disingenuous words regarding values won’t affect change in the postmodern mindset. As it was in the beginning—especially in Christian outreach—to win a heart and mind, you must establish a trustworthy bond with the people you encounter. Is your word your bond? That’s what the old timers would ask. It’s okay to say what you mean, just mean what you say. In other words, live your words. Walk your talk. After all, Christian, your life is the only Bible many people will ever read.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon, but until He does—let’s walk the talk.

Pastor T.

⁶ Ibid, 82.

From a Lamb to a Lion

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Revelation 5:1-14

Introduction:

On October 30, 1974, Muhammad Ali and George Foreman squared off in the boxing ring in Zaire. Ali had dubbed it “The Rumble in the Jungle.” Foreman was heavily favored, and considered the hardest puncher in heavyweight history. Ali did something in that fight that no other fighter had ever dared to try. He held up his arms against his face and leaned back against the ropes allowing Foreman to punch away at him for eight rounds. The strongest boxer in history beat on Ali until he could punch no more. When the right moment came, Ali bounced off the ropes and knocked out Foreman, sending him into retirement. Ali called his technique “rope-a-dope.” Even though it looked like he was losing the fight, and losing badly, he was in control the whole time. He took all those punches because he knew he would deliver the final blow.

Lesson Background:

In chapter four of the book of Revelation, John describes a scene in heaven which is beyond words. God is seated on the throne. He rules the universe. He has the right, the authority, and the power to end the world. And he is surrounded by living beings that John has never seen before and cannot adequately describe with the limitations of human language and experience.

As we come to chapter five, John continues his dramatic description of the scene in heaven. He sees a throne and someone sitting on it whom he does not even attempt to describe, but in his hand there is a scroll. There is writing on both sides of this scroll and it is sealed with seven seals. A call goes forth for someone to open the scroll, but no one is found who is able to open it. John understands the enormous significance of the scroll and begins to weep at the terrible calamity that he feels. But just then, he is told: “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” John immediately turns to see this great lion that has just been described to him, but he does not see a lion. He sees a lamb. And not just any lamb, but one with death wounds. John can see the blood and the open wounds with which he has been inflicted.

The Paradox of what John saw:

Here is a paradox. (A paradox is a seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true.) *How can a lion be a lamb?* The two are opposites. One is the hunter and the other the prey. One is placed in a cage with iron bars; the other in a petting zoo. We have all heard of an *oxymoron*. It is where seemingly contradictory terms are combined. It is an oxymoron to talk about jumbo shrimp, fresh frozen food, or a holy war. We talk about a cool heat, or a deafening silence. A lion-like lamb is an oxymoron. The terms do not belong together — except in heaven. Here the lion is the lamb. His power was found in his death, because with his death he purchased the souls of people,

and he was thereby made worthy to open the scroll.

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=42529>

Lesson objective:

In this fascinating scene acted out before John's eyes, there is a truth regarding God's last say over humanity. There are three things, specifically, which stand out in God's last say to humanity: (1) For one as we consider world events, which seem to be spiraling out of control—for example in spite of our best efforts to bring peace to Iraq, a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis is escalating to an alarming pitch with no solutions in sight—God's strength is disguised in weakness. (2) Secondly God's indictment against humanity in the end is His perfect justice. (3) And thirdly, the prayers of the saints of all times will be answered. You may bank on the fact that God answers the prayers of His people.

First supporting statement:

God's strength is disguised as weakness. The secret to God's great strength is in his apparent weakness. Look at the Lamb of God dying on the cross. Was there ever any greater appearance of weakness on the part of God? They taunted him and said, "Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:40). The irony was that he was able to come down from the cross, but chose not to. What God was doing was the most powerful act that he would ever perform. Greater than the creation of the world, and greater than bringing the world to an end, Christ's redemptive act on the cross was God at work in his greatest hour. His strength was hidden, but it was God's most powerful moment. In this humble act of God, the devil was shamed and robbed of his power. We will never know this side of heaven, what terrible struggles took place in the spiritual world between Palm Sunday and Easter morning. But one thing we do know: the lamb became a lion.

We want displays of power. Especially do we want people see that we are on the winning side, but God is content with the appearance of weakness. His purpose in this is profound. What if God always won? What if good always triumphed and doing the right always paid tremendous dividends. Everyone would flock to God and follow him. People will do the things they benefit from personally. And people also want to be on the winning side. It makes them feel important. So God could actually win the world over through a consistent display of power. But where would people's hearts be? Would they love God for himself, or for his power? Would they love him or fear him? Would they want God to use their lives, or would they want to use God for their own purposes?

What about a God who appears to be weak? What if it looks like evil is winning and most people are on evil's side? What if people who follow Christ are ridiculed and even persecuted? What if it becomes a disadvantage to be a Christian? What then? Then only the people who truly love God follow God and live for him. Only those who love God, for who he is, rather than what they can get out of him, dare to be called by his name. Only those who love the truth, regardless of how weak or irrelevant it is made to appear by the world, will follow the truth. It does not take courage to follow what everyone else believes and does, it takes courage to follow the truth when others do not understand and belittle what you believe. It takes courage to do the right thing even though you are

punished for it at work or school. It takes courage to stand up for what is right when everyone else thinks you are wrong. These are the kind of people God wants for his followers. Anyone can take the easy road, and you don't have to be much of a person to do it. But Jesus said we must, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" (Matthew 7:13).

We are uncomfortable that Jesus asks us to join him in his weakness. While he was here, he said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). He often asks us to do the opposite of the way the people of the world think. Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12). The Bible says, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:21-23).

The appearance of weakness is not a concern of God, for it is his strength. God is not interested in appearances, because he is interested in reality. The reality is that he rules the universe despite what anyone thinks, and he will bring the world to its appointed end. The Bible says, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. . . . But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Corinthians 1:25, 27-29). <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=42529&page=2>

The second supporting statement:

The scroll introduced in Revelation chapter five is God's indictment on the evil of all time. He, He alone, is just in His judgments. Only He can open and serve the indictment in perfect righteousness.

In Daniel 12:4 Daniel is told to seal and hide his book of end time events. In Revelation five the scroll of God is brought out into the open and the seven seals are to be broken, one at a time. According to Bible scholars, the fact that the scroll was sealed seven times has a historical significance. In Roman times (the time in which this letter was written or about 90 AD), official documents such as a last-will-and-testament were sealed by seven members of the family. Before the will could be opened and read, each one of the seven family members who had sealed it had to be present to break his seal respectively.

And what does the scroll represent? As Shelly says in his commentary:

This scroll is the book of the destiny of mankind. In it could be found the fate of the suffering saints, the outcome of Rome's machinations against the church, and an outline of the future from John's time through

the resolution of the particular battle raging between his brethren and Satan's forces. The things revealed in the subsequent visions of the Revelation were bound up in this scroll."

The scroll reveals how God would manifest his righteous indignation upon those who rejected His Christ and persecuted His people. Also, how the suffering saints would eventually overcome. As long as the scroll was sealed, the workings of God were still a mystery. But as the seals are broken (6:1-8:1), we have:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- things which must shortly take place." (1:1)

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/rev/rev_05.htm

One thing the book of Revelation does well is balance the grace of God with His holiness or His righteousness. One thing the world doesn't do very well is give equal time to God's coming judgments on sin. Quite the contrary. The world would rather think of God as a happy-go-lucky God who would never even consider holding someone accountable for his or her immorality. For example, the idea of hell and judgment are nowhere to be found in Betty Eadie's book, *Embraced by the Light*, (N.Y. Times' bestseller list for more than 40 weeks, including five weeks as number one). In November 1973 Eadie allegedly died after undergoing a hysterectomy, and returned five hours later with the secrets of heaven revealed by Jesus. Eadie says that Jesus "never wanted to do or say anything that would offend me" while she visited heaven. Indeed, Jesus seems to be relegated to the role of a happy tour guide in heaven, not the Savior of the world who died on the cross. <http://www.near-death.com/forum/nde/000/93.html>

Another example of freedom from God's wrath upon sin comes from President Clinton's administration in 1993. In that year Clinton named Kristine Gebbie, a lesbian, as the new AIDS czar. Four months later she spelled out her perceptions on traditional morality. She said, [The United States] needs to view human sexuality as an essentially important and pleasurable thing. [Until it does so], we will continue to be a repressed, Victorian society that misrepresents information, denies homosexual sexuality, particularly in teens, and leaves people abandoned with no place to go. I can help just a little bit in my job, standing on the White House lawn talking about sex with no lightning bolts falling on my head." [Associated Press, October 29, 1993.](#)

Yes—Kristine Gebbie—it's true. You can say many wrong things in this life and survive without thunderbolts from heaven dropping on you. Why is this? It is because God chooses to suspend His wrath upon humanity until the fifth chapter of Revelation. But at that time, the judgment seals will be unleashed and the earth will come to know the just judgments of a loving God, who can not co-exist throughout eternity with sin.

Third supporting statement:

The prayers of God's people throughout the ages for vindication against evil will one day be answered. This is a fact repeated in Revelation. In Revelation 5:8 we read that the 24 Elders before the Throne of God are holding harps and bowls full of incense and fragrance, which are the prayers of the saints. The contents in the bowls are released throughout the universe, especially upon the earth.

What might be the requests or those prayers? I believe they are the prayers of saints from all times asking God to bring justice against evil—the evil that has oppressed, ridiculed, maligned, tormented, tortured, lied against, and murdered the people of God as they lived uncompromisingly for the witness of God. The Bible is clear. The people of God should not faint but always pray. Why? God answers prayers; therefore, it behooves us to pray. While crossing the Atlantic on an ocean liner, F.B. Meyer was asked to address the first class passengers. At the captain's request he spoke on "Answered Prayer." An agnostic who was present at the service was asked by his friends, "What did you think of Dr. Meyer's sermon?" He answered, "I didn't believe a word of it." That afternoon Meyer went to speak to the steerage passengers. Many of the listeners at his morning address went along, including the agnostic, who claimed he just wanted to hear "what the babbler had to say."

Before starting for the service, the agnostic put two oranges in his pocket. On his way he passed an elderly woman sitting in her deck chair fast asleep. Her hands were open. In the spirit of fun, the agnostic put the two oranges in her outstretched palms. After the meeting, he saw the old lady happily eating one of the pieces of fruit. "You seem to be enjoying that orange," he remarked with a smile. "Yes, sir," she replied, "My Father is very good to me." "Your father? Surely your father can't be still alive!" "Praise God," she replied, "He is very much alive." "What do you mean?" pressed the agnostic. She explained, "I'll tell you, sir. I have been seasick for days. I was asking God somehow to send me an orange. I suppose I fell asleep while I was praying. When I awoke, I found He had not only sent me one orange but two!" The agnostic was speechless. Later he was converted to Christ. Yes, praying in God's will brings an answer. *Our Daily Bread*.

*Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say ungranted;
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done;
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,
And God will finish what He has begun.
Though years have passed since then, do not
despair; His glory you shall see, sometime,
somewhere. [Ophelia Adams](#).*

Conclusion:

God will one day vindicate His people from the hand of evil. He will bring judgment upon the face of the earth, declaring His perfect justice over sin. I may not see every

answer to my prayers in this life, but I am quickly reminded by the Holy Spirit that there is yet a life to come.

So we come full circle in regards to God's final blow to evil. Although His Almighty power is somewhat veiled in this life, His knock-out punch is coming.

Just as Ali used Foreman's strength to his benefit, God is using the "rope-a-dope" technique on the world of evil. Just when the devil and the antichrist amass all their armies, and have spent themselves fighting the Lord and his people, just when it looks as though the kingdom of God is on the ropes, God will deliver the final blow. Just when it looks like evil will win, God steps in. Just when it looks as though evil will have the final word, God will destroy it with his final word. The Bible says, "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

Good for Bad News

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Romans 8:28 “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.” (RSV)

Philippians 1:6 “And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (RSV)

Philippians 2:13 “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (RSV)

After reading these selected scriptures, do you get the idea that God is working through our circumstances, calling, and worship?

May I tell you a story? Sam was one of the finest painters America ever produced. But that's not the reason there's a statue erected in his honor in New York's Central Park.

Sam was doing a portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette when he received a letter. He abandoned his portrait assignment and turned his back on his profession. The year was 1832 and the letter came on horseback, taking seven days from the time it was written until it was read by Sam.

The letter simply said that Sam's wife was dead. Sam was filled with the anguish of a man who felt that if he had been there it might have been different. So he committed himself to mass communication so no man must ever again learn—seven days late—that his wife had needed him.

Oh, by the way—the man was Sam Morse. He discovered how to make electricity talk and devised a system of dots and dashes which we know by his name—the Morse Code (Derric Johnson, *The Wonder of America*, Honor Books: Tulsa, OK 1999). His wife died alone, but Western Union was born.

Life brings trials and difficulties beyond our control. Someone once said that life is just one big multiple-choice test, and circling “C” by default doesn't make the grade. Trials in life can do one of two things to us: it can make us stronger because what doesn't kill us only makes us stronger or it can conquer our spirit, leaving us embittered for life.

How do you choose to face your trial today? You may panic and curse out loud, or you may cast your cares upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You may say something like this: Lord, you know the trial I'm facing today. As difficult as these times are, nevertheless, I choose to give you my trials. Lord, I'm asking that you walk with me through this mess and empower me with the strength and might to overcome the trial, not allowing the trial to overcome me. I thank you Jesus. I call it done, now, in Jesus' name.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.
Pastor T.

The Greater Glory

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Someone once said, “When the sun has risen the lamp ceases to be of use.” And consider this: “The second best is the worst enemy of the best.” People have always tended to cling to the old even when something far better is offered. For example, at one time religious people refused the use of chloroform as an anesthetic on religious grounds. When Richard Wagner refused to follow traditional opera and, instead, substituted musical drama in its place, people would not have it. No one today denies Wagner’s genius. He is recognized as one of the classics. And so it goes. Because a thing was always done, it is right, and because a thing was never done, it is wrong.⁷

Consider these verses: “Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (II Corinthians 3:4-6. NASB) Look again at the words “a new covenant,” and reflect once more on the “old covenant.” The old covenant is the “lamp” that ceases to be of use because the sun has risen in the new covenant.

The old covenant is second best to the new covenant.

Why do I say this? I say this for several reasons. For one, the old covenant was based on a written document. (Exodus 24:1-8) On the other hand the new covenant is based on the power of the life-giving Spirit. Barclay writes, “A written document is always something that is external; whereas the work of the Spirit changes a man’s very heart. A man may obey the written code while all the time he wishes to disobey it; but when the Spirit comes into his heart and controls it, not only does he not break the code, he does not even wish to break it, because he is a changed man. A written code can change the law; only the Spirit can change human nature.”

Secondly, the old covenant was a deadly thing because it produced a legal relationship between God and man. And legalism kills. It kills *hope* because there is never any hope that a man can keep the commandments of God with human nature being what it is. We are prone to rebel against the righteous standard of God’s holiness. It killed *life*. Under the law of God a man was condemned if he broke the law, and condemnation meant death. It killed *strength*. It was perfectly able to tell a man what to do, but it could not help him do it.⁸

In contrast, the new covenant is very different. For one, it is a relationship of love. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world...” It is a relationship between a father and his sons. There is an old Roman story which tells how a Roman Emperor was enjoying a

⁷ William Barclay, *Growing in Christian Faith a Book of Daily Readings*, (Kentucky, Westminster Press, 2000), p.16.

⁸ *Ibid.* p.15.

victory of battle. He had the privilege, which Rome gave to her great victors, of marching his troops through the streets of Rome, with all his captured trophies and his prisoners in his train.

So the Emperor was on the march with his troops. The streets were lined with cheering people. The tall legionaries lined the streets' edges to keep the people in their places. At one point on the triumphal route there was a platform where the Empress and her family were sitting to watch the Emperor go by in all the pride of his triumph. On the platform with his mother was the Emperor's youngest son. As the Emperor came near the little boy jumped off the platform, burrowed through the crowd, tried to dodge between the legs of the legionary and to run out on the road to meet his father's chariot. The legionary stooped down and stopped the boy in his tracks. He then swung him up in his arms: "You can't do that, boy," he said. "Don't you know who that is in the chariot?" That's the Emperor of Rome. You can't run out to his chariot." And the little lad laughed down. "He may be your Emperor," he said, "but he's my father."

That is exactly the way the Christian feels toward God. The might, and the majesty, and the power are the might, and the majesty, and the power of one whom Jesus taught us to call *Our Father*.⁹

Secondly, the new covenant changes the heart of man. It changes the nature of man not by imposing a new code of laws on him, but by changing his heart. Only the Holy Spirit of God can change a man's heart. A man may turn over and new leaf, but that isn't a sufficient change for his heart. In order for the heart to change it must be reborn, regenerated, resurrected. Only by calling on the name of Jesus can a man hope to see change. And only by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit can the heart of man be birthed into life eternal.

Moreover, the new covenant doesn't just tell a man what to do to be right with God, it gives him the power to do it. In II Corinthians three, Paul contrasts the two covenants. The old covenant was born in glory. When Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, which is the code of the old covenant, his face shone with such splendor that no one could look at it. Obviously that was a transient splendor. It did not and it could not last. The new covenant, the new relationship which Jesus Christ makes possible between man and God, has a greater splendor which will never fade because it produces pardon and not condemnation, life and not death.¹⁰

Here's the warning of the second best becoming the worst enemy of the best. The Jews preferred the old covenant, the law. They rejected the new covenant, the new relationship in Christ. The old covenant was not a bad thing. It was merely second best to the new. How about you? Are you promoting a life of good works ahead of salvation in Jesus? Are you trying to earn your way to heaven? It can't be done. And if you try, you are deceived by promoting a good thing ahead of the only thing that can get you right with God. Jesus, faith in His name, is the only way to life abundant. The Son is risen, and the path to God

⁹ Ibid. pp.17-18.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.16.

is clearly seen. The fading lamp of the old covenant is no match, no substitute for the Son's splendor and glory. Let the glory of the new covenant shine on your heart today.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

The Hands of God

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

During initial construction on the Golden Gate Bridge, no safety devices were used and 23 men fell to their deaths. For the final part of the project, however, a large net was used as a safety precaution. At least 10 men fell into it and were saved from certain death. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that 25% more work was accomplished after the net was installed. Why? Because the men had the assurance of their safety, and they were free to wholeheartedly serve the project.

God has provided us a security net for you and me. It is His everlasting and loving *hands*. John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.” RSV Have you ever stopped to consider the hands of God? If we are embedded in them, and we are through Jesus Christ, we should know something about them. I’m going to share three simple things about the hands of God:

First, the hands of God are vast, beyond comprehension.

Secondly, the hands of God are very strong.

Thirdly, the hands of God are nail scarred for you.

Let’s begin:

Just how vast are the hands of God? Isaiah 40:12, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?” RSV

His hands are large enough to hold you through all eternity. As a matter of record, the Bible declares that not even the devil himself could pluck us from the hands of God. This is called ***security***. Through faith in Christ Jesus, I am secure throughout all eternity.

In Titus 2:14 the King James Version translates the Greek word *periousios* into the English word ***peculiar***. The Greek word is peculiar in the sense that it is made up of two words in the Greek, forming one compound word. It literally means “to be around something as a circle is around a dot.” Think about this for a moment. We, the people of God, are peculiar in the sense that God has wrapped Himself around us. Nothing can get to us without God’s permission. This is true security.

II.

Secondly, the hands of God are very strong, especially His right hand. Psalm 63:8, “...thy right hand upholds me.” I wonder why His left hand isn’t mentioned? In the Bible, the right hand stands for strength, power, and authority.

The right side of God is for the sheep on the day of end-time harvest. The left side is for the goats. When the Bible refers to left handed people, it is usually to point out the uniqueness of being skillful with the odd hand. But the right hand of God upholds, therefore, it is His strong hand.

It is strong enough to hold all my weight. The weight I'm referring to here is not limited to my physical frame but all the baggage I bring into the relationship. I come to Him many times laden with cares and concerns and yet I never slip through His grip.

This is amazing grace. I can cast all my cares on Him because He cares for me (I Peter 5:7). The author and minister Watchman Nee tells about a new convert who came in deep distress to see him. "No matter how much I pray, no matter how hard I try, I simply cannot seem to be faithful to my Lord. I think I'm losing my salvation." Nee said, "Do you see this dog here? He is my dog. He is house-trained; he never makes a mess; he is obedient; he is a pure delight to me. Out in the kitchen I have a son, a baby son. He makes a mess, he throws his food around, he fouls his clothes, and he is a total mess. But who is going to inherit my kingdom? Not my dog; my son is my heir. You are Jesus Christ's heir because it is for you that He died." We are Christ's heirs, not through our perfection but by means of His grace.

III.

Thirdly, His hands are nail scarred for you and me. Someone once said that the only man made things in heaven are the scars on the body of Jesus. He is scarred to remind us throughout eternity of the depth of His love and the cost of our sin. The blood of Jesus flowed through those man-inflicted wounds. His blood did four things on our behalf:

- (1) The sweat of His brow in the Garden looked like drops of blood. They tell me that it is medically possible to endure such trauma and duress that the capillaries around the sweat glands leak blood into the glands, giving the appearance that a person is sweating blood. I believe that Jesus bled in the Garden, and the blood from His brow purchased my deliverance from worry and heartache. By the blood of Jesus I can be free of cares, concerns, and worries because I may cast them upon Him. Praise God!
- (2) When the Roman soldiers crowned Jesus with thorns, I'm sure the devil thought he had crowned Jesus with the curse of the ground. When Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the ground for their sake and thorns and thistles were the curse's crowning glory. By the blood of Jesus, I am free from the curse of the ground. I can live in good success and prosperity by His name (Joshua 1:8).
- (3) When they beat Jesus, ripping His flesh open, He bled for our physical healing. Isaiah 53 and Matthew 8:17 declare that by the blood of His wounds we are healed. I can trust God for wholeness—mind, soul, and body. His blood covers every part of my being—my mind that is subject to worry, my

need for food and clothing, my physical body that get's sick from time to time, and my soul that is sin stained.

- (4) When they nailed Him on the cross and pierced His side with a spear, His blood purchased my redemption from sin. I am forever free from my sin in Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus did for me on the cross, I can live forever. And so may you if you call upon Jesus and ask Him to save you.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming again.
Pastor T.

Sermon to accompany current findings on the Temple Mount

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Second Thessalonians is Paul's second epistle to the church at Thessalonica in Macedonia (Modern Greece). The story of Paul's stay at Thessalonica is in Acts 17:1-10. Now, for Paul, what happened at Thessalonica was of supreme importance. He preached in the synagogue for three Sabbaths, which means that his stay there could not have been much more than three weeks in length.

He had such tremendous success that the Jews were enraged and raised so much trouble that Paul had to be smuggled out, in peril of his life, to Berea. Paul was also chased out of Berea but left behind Timothy and Silas while he escaped to Athens. When Timothy later joined Paul in Athens, he sent him back to Thessalonica to get information regarding the new Christian converts. Timothy returned with good news and bad news. Paul was still admired by the new converts and they were standing fast in the faith; however, there was some worrying news to report:

For one, Paul's teaching regarding the Second Coming of Christ had produced an unhealthy situation in which people had stopped working and had abandoned all ordinary pursuits to await the return of Jesus. Paul will answer them and tell them to stop gossiping, meddling in other's affairs, and go back to work.

Secondly, they were worried about those Christians who died before the coming of Christ. Paul tells them that the dead in Christ will rise first to meet the Lord in the air.

Thirdly, there was a tendency to despise all lawful authority. This, of course, reflected their Greek heritage of democracy without aristocracy or federalist rule.

And lastly they were prone to fall back into immorality, causing division in the church body, and contempt for Paul eventually.

Second Thessalonians is written just days or weeks after First Thessalonians to clear up a misconception about the Second Coming. Paul explains what must take place before the

Second Coming. (William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. p. 181-183).

For the purpose of this writing, I direct your attention to chapter two of the second letter.

The Lawless One

Paul makes an emphatic statement in verses one and two of chapter two: Do not be soon shaken in mind! “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, [2](#) That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.” (KJV) The word "shaken" describes the ship that is tossed in the middle of the stormy ocean. Do not be troubled or fearful, not by or through the mind nor through some one's words, nor by the writing of someone. Some believe and it is possible that someone had written a letter to the church signing Paul's name, declaring that the church had missed the rapture and were actually living in the tribulation period. The believers were visibly shaken by this report. Paul encourages them and lets them know that this is not the case at all.

Paul now shares with them various things which must happen prior to the coming of the Lord and our gathering unto him:

A. There will be a *defection*.

I Timothy 4:1 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” (KJV)

The words "falling away" literally mean "defection" or "departure." Prior to the coming of the Lord there will be a great defection or departure from the faith and from truth. There have been times of Church Apostasy throughout its 2000 year history. Yet the days preceding the coming of Christ will be days when more and more people will fall away from the truth of the scriptures.

Is it possible that we are living in this time of "falling away"? It is not only possible, but probable. Many believers are forsaking the word of God today for the sake of acceptance and accommodation.

B. There will be a *departing*.

1. A *departing* of the saints.

Paul wrote earlier to these believers concerning this departing. I Thessalonians 4.

16 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (KJV)

Paul fully expected this event to take place in his life time. Notice the words: "we which are alive..." If Paul thought the coming of the Lord was nigh then, how much closer are we to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ today. This imminence should move each one of us to be certain of our relationship with God. Matthew 24:44 “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” (KJV)

If the Lord should call today, would you ascend to meet him in the clouds or would you be left behind to endure the greatest time of tribulation ever experienced on this earth?

2. A *departing* of the Restrainer.

II Thessalonians 2:7 “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” (KJV)

The spirit of antichrist is at work, and has been throughout the church age. The one thing preventing the man of sin, the antichrist, from coming on the scene and being revealed is the Spirit of God working through the Church. Check out the condition of the world today and imagine what it will be like without the restraining work of the Spirit and without the moral impact of the church. Once the rapture of the church takes place the Spirit of God will be taken out of the way. "Taken out of the way" literally means removed from the middle. The Spirit of God is now standing in the middle holding down the Anti-Christ, but he shall move from the middle when the rapture occurs.

I John 4:3 “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (KJV)

c. There will be a *debut*.

The Man of Sin, the son of Perdition, the Anti-Christ, shall make his debut or appearance following the rapture of the church. He evidently will already be present and working because Paul warns that the mystery of iniquity that was already present in the world at the time of his writing.

Yet he will not officially come on the scene until after the rapture of the church and after the Holy Spirit ceases to restrain him.

d. There will be a *delusion*. (Verses 11-12 of II Thessalonians 2)

The church is now gone—“raptured” out. The Holy Spirit has been removed from his position of retaining. The Anti-Christ is now revealed. He begins his pernicious works. God now sends a strong “delusion” (i.e. working of error) upon those left behind "who

have received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Their fate is now sealed as they are damned because they believed not the truth.

III. The Enemy Described. (Verses 4-12 of II Thessalonians 2)

a. He situates himself

1. Against God...

2. As God...

3. In the Temple of God.

To seat himself in the Temple at the mid point of the Tribulation period, the Temple must first of all be rebuilt. Before this can take place, something must happen to the Muslim Mosque which now sits on the site of where the temple was. (Refer to PP entitled: News from Israel" February 7, 2007)

c. He shows himself.

1. with power.

2. with signs.

3. with lying wonders.

IV. The End Determined (Verse 8 of II Thessalonians 2)

At the end of the tribulation period, the Anti-Christ will be defeated and will be cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 19:20 "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." (KJV)

Paul concludes chapter two with a benediction. He prays asking God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ to

a. Comfort them.

He is more than able to comfort us in times of trouble and difficulty because he has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

b. Confirm them.

The word "stablish" means to "fix in a certain direction". God wants our focus and resolve in the last days to be upon good words and work.

II Thessalonians 2:16 “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace...” (KJV)

II Thessalonians 2:17 “Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” (KJV) <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=66528&page=2>

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon. Pastor T.

I'm just glad I found you...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

The townspeople were sickened. A fire which started in a diner was threatening the entire shopping district. Suddenly, a truck filled with farm workers came speeding down a hill toward the fire. The crowd moved back as the truck drove right into the flames.

Immediately, the workers jumped out and beat at the fire with their coats, miraculously bringing it under control. The city fathers were so grateful for the men's heroism that they gave to each a plaque and a \$1,000 reward. After the ceremony, a newsman interviewed the driver and asked him what he was going to do with the money. Without a moment's hesitation the man replied, "You can be sure the first thing I'm gonna do is fix the brakes on my truck." (Brian L. Harbour, *Rising Above the Crowd*, Nashville: Broadman, 1988).

I was thinking about you today and thanking God that you are a part of my life. You may have stumbled across my path, without any intention of an extended stay. Or you might have sought me out purposefully. (You're a brave soul). I really don't care how you came into my life, I'm just grateful to God that you are here.

Moreover, I want to thank you for your support of this ministry that God has placed in my hands. Because of you, your prayers, your financial giving of the tithe and offering, because of your dedication and commitment to relationships, I am a very blessed man. I want you to know that I count my blessings daily, and you are included in that thanksgiving.

I bless you today in Jesus' name. I pray that you and your family prosper mightily by the loving hand of God throughout 2007. I encourage you: keep the faith, stay the course, and know that Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

Indifference really is impossible

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Maybe you think you give more than your employer deserves or certainly the thought passes through your mind that you're underpaid. Do you remember Madame Curie? She and her husband discovered radioactivity, which led to the eventual development of radiology—X-rays.

She won two Nobel Peace Prizes in her lifetime for chemistry and physics—the only person in history to win the Prize in both fields of study. If you wanted to study her papers from the 1890s, you couldn't because they are too dangerous to handle—they're literally radioactive.¹¹ She certainly gave a lot of herself to her work. And it took a lot from her. She died of leukemia in 1934.

Maybe you think you sacrifice a lot for your family—working additional jobs to free up disposable income. Well, have you ever heard of Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev? He was born into wealth. But as fate would have it and due to adverse circumstances, his life went from grand to grim.

When his father went blind and his mother had to go to work, she showed an unimaginable resilience to defeat. Clearly an extraordinary woman, she eventually became the manager of a successful glass factory. All went well until 1848, when the factory burned down and the family was reduced to penury. Determined to get her youngest child an education, the indomitable Mrs. Mendeleev hitched hiked with young Dmitri four thousand miles to St. Petersburg—that's equivalent to traveling from London to Equatorial Guinea—and deposited him at the Institute of Pedagogy. Worn out by her efforts, she died soon after.¹²

Dmitri her son she left behind, said to have been inspired by the card game known as solitaire in North America, developed the periodic table—a thing of beauty in the abstract, but for chemists it established an immediate orderliness and clarity that can hardly be overstated. I'm sure whatever Mrs. Mendeleev sacrificed for her family was really no sacrifice at all to her. After all, Dmitri made history and her sacrifice is recorded there as well.

Maybe you think you can remain indifferent to Jesus Christ. What does it matter to you that He was a prophet, a regular Joe, or the only begotten Son of God? I'm sure that your life is filled with other things to be concerned about—your career, social standing in community, where you'll spend your next vacation, and etc. Don't get me wrong. These are common concerns and worthy of our thoughts; however, they are not the main issues of life. Jesus is the one who split history into B.C. and A.D., the one who keeps bumping into your indifference, and the only one who can change your heart's content. Jesus is powerful. And you can't stay indifferent towards Him forever.

¹¹ Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, (New York: Broadway Books, 2003), p.111.

¹² Ibid. p.106.

One day every tongue will confess and every knee will bow to Him. It behooves you to do it in this life instead of waiting until the next life. Jesus gave up too much for your soul. He won't let you remain indifferent. And that's a good thing.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.

Can this possibly be true?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Is it true that a man or woman may be known by God, set apart for a unique service, and given a ministry title all before he or she is conceived in the womb? Answer: Jeremiah 1:4-5 (RSV) “Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you: I appointed you a prophet to the nations.’”

Is it true that a man or woman is destined to become more in the hands of God than in his or her eyes of limitations? Answer: Jeremiah 1:6-8 (RSV) “Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.’ But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you says the LORD.’”

Jeremiah 1:9 (RSV) “Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, ‘Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.’”

Is it true that God is watching over His Word, making sure that it comes to pass just like He said it would? Answer: Jeremiah 1:12 (RSV) “Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.’”

Is it true that the Bible predicted events in history long before they came to pass? Answer: Jeremiah 1:14 (RSV) “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.’” (Judah was carried away into captivity for 70 years by the Chaldeans in 586 B.C.)

Is it true that God will be with you in your unique service and ministry for Him? Jeremiah 1:18-19 (RSV) “And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.”

To be continued...

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus called you to the fight so fight.

Pastor T.

Is it true? (B)

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

From the writings of Jeremiah the Prophet

(All scriptures quoted come from the Revised Standard Version Bible.)

Is it true that a man or woman may know God intimately then, over time, grow cold towards Him? Jeremiah 2:2-3 “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest. All who are of it became guilty; evil came upon them, says the LORD.”

Is it true that the fault of a sour relationship is with us—God’s own people—and never the fault of God? Jeremiah 2:5 “Thus says the LORD: ‘What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless’”

Author’s note: *All those who seek worthlessness in this life, themselves become worthless to life.*

Is it true that abusing God’s creation, for instance the soil, is an abomination to God? Jeremiah 2:7 “And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.”

[Exodus 23:11 (KJV) “But the **seventh year** thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.” Leviticus 25:4 (KJV) “But in the **seventh year** shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.” **When Israel went into captivity it was for 70 years, a year for every failed Sabbath rest of the land. God wants us to live responsibly on the land. Take care of the land, and the land will take care of you.**]

Is it true that a child of God may exchange the glory of God for that which profits him nothing? Jeremiah 2:11 “Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD...”

Conclusion: “...for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Verse 17 “Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD you God, when he led you in the way?” Verse 19 “...the fear of me is not in you, says the LORD GOD of hosts.”

It pays to keep the faith. So stay the course. God rewards all those who put their trust in Him. Pastor T.

The success is in you...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Success is waiting on you.

Ebenezer lived in Sterling, Massachusetts, and made his living as a tailor of men's apparel. It was on a winter's night in 1863 that his wife was sitting at the dining room table trying to cut out a dress for their daughter. She became exasperated with the awkward task. "It would be a lot easier to do this if I had some kind of pattern to guide me," she fumed. Ebenezer had been quietly reading, but her comment interrupted his story.

Suddenly he was struck with a brilliant idea that revolutionized home sewing. Why not make sewing patterns out of paper? Until that night tailors and dressmakers had fashioned their own patterns out of leather or heavy cloth—but they were so expensive that ordinary housewives couldn't begin to afford them.

Ed began to figure. He was sure that he could sell paper patterns for ten cents apiece and still make a profit. He shared his idea with other tailors, but they dismissed it as a "sheer waste of good time." Undaunted, he kept at it and in a few months was selling hundreds of patterns. Within a year he moved to New York and opened a sales office. Soon he was selling six million patterns a year (Derric Johnson, *The Wonders of America*, Honor Books: Tulsa, OK 1999). Who was this enterprising young man? Well if you've ever made a dress for your daughter that required a sewing pattern, you've probably come across the name: ***Ebenezer Butterick***.

What about you? Could you be the next "Butterick?" Crazy you say? Maybe, but the point is this: *Self-generated success always begins with a thought—an idea that, unfortunately, may be easily dismissed because it's usually a radical concept.* And because it is radical by conventional means, it's usually never developed or taken beyond one's conversation. But, on the other hand, it can become very rewarding to "think outside the box"—to birth the idea and follow through with it to fill a certain need or market trend. Granted many people have ideas, but the key to success is making the idea a reality. As someone has said, "You've got to plan your work and then work your plan."

God has given us great potential if we simply use our heads. But as with all things that God gives us comes responsibility—to whom much is given (talent, success, and etc.), much (responsibility) is required. If you want success in this life, the Bible says that first you must do something. You must "**hear**" His instructions, and then you must "**do**" or follow His instructions.

Hearing and *doing* to succeed in the Kingdom of God is akin, in principle, to getting a great idea and then following through with the idea—bringing it all the way to market. But with the *hearing* and *doing* comes the responsibility of accepting various risk factors. For example, yes, you might develop a great idea and then watch it flop on the market. And, yes, you could hear the Word of God, decide to follow it, and then come under great persecution. But this is the responsibility that comes with success.

Don't let the responsibility of risk keep you from moving forward. Especially be not deterred by what could happen to you in following Jesus Christ. Why? Because the risk of persecution we assume in Jesus Christ is absorbed by who He is. He is God Almighty. He rewards those who seek Him. God will not fail His people. So go ahead and assume the risk of serving Him. His success for your life is waiting for you now. Get moving!

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is all we need.
Pastor T.

