

Tablespoons of God...

Thoughts & Reflections

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Forward

The things you will read here are part of the journey God has led me on thus far.

It has been such an exciting growth and rebirth that I no longer remember just where I started. God's mercy and love guides me and my hope, my prayer, is for you - that you will hunger and thirst for *all* of Him. He seeks to give you living water so that you will thirst no more.

Our Lord is a personable God who seeks a relationship with you. He is as real as the sun's warmth upon your face on a crisp November morning.

Father as those who read this turn the pages, allow them to see Your mighty love and guidance as they soak in Your love. Give them a hunger for all of You, and not just the tablespoonfuls I have shared with them.

Let Your grace and truth set them free. Keep them safe as they along with me continue on this wonderful walk with You, in Jesus name, Amen

Introduction

Regardless of where we place a saltshaker - the refrigerator, the dishwasher or in the hot bright sun, it remains what is created to be - a saltshaker. Why is it so hard for us to be what we were created to be, *children of God*? Yet we tend to let circumstances affect us, instead of relying on the promises of God.

Did He not say He would bring the valleys high and mountains low to make our path smooth?

A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

"Let every valley be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

(Who are you walking with?)

Does he not protect us? He said no weapon formed shall prosper against you.

"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD.

(Why listen to the imp's lies?)

He leaves us His peace, not of the world, but it far surpasses it.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. "

(Do you not claim this promise?)

We are more than just conquerors in Christ Jesus - we are *overwhelmingly* conquerors.

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

We allow the imp to control our emotions because we believe his lies over the promises of God. Why is this so?

And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

(So is this it; that we lack faith?)

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Again, He says if you ask, do so with the knowledge that it will be given to you, and not like a wave tossed in the sea.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

(His wisdom brings about faith)

I was speaking to our Lord Jesus and saw a stream. He told me to follow the water. Then He said, "Go to the mouth of the water", and I saw a great expanse of clear blue ocean far beyond my sight's range. This signified Heaven. Remember when the storm came and Jesus came upon them? One got out of the boat, Peter. Why do so many sit in the boat of salvation, complacent in their faith. Jesus is calling you closer to Him and in this, your faith will not only grow, but you will be a beacon to others. Stop listening to the lie the imp is selling you. Believe the promises of God. The God who created all you see and do not see. The same great God that made you with His love. Draw near to Him and His comfort will cover you.

Then I saw a high wheat field. To me this signified a great harvest. Now if we would allow Him to work in us we could be part of His great harvest! Heed to the will of God and shake off the imp's lies, for he only has the control you give him. Jesus is your king, be what He made you to be!

but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the saltshaker was made to be a saltshaker and nothing can change that, so you as well were made to glorify God nothing can change that. The quicker you come to terms with this, the less the imp can manipulate you.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty {again?} It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

*nor does {anyone} light a lamp and put it under a basket,
but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in
the house.*

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they
may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in
heaven*

What more can I say, His word speaks volumes. I hope these writings get you re-focused upon your King, who made you to glorify Himself. Believe His promises, for He is trustworthy. May all His peace keep and guide you.

Wait Upon the Lord



Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up {with} wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

I am going to expose more about myself here than I would normally feel comfortable doing, but if I cannot be honest, I can be of no use.

Have any of you ever known exactly what the Lord was calling you to do, but been afraid of crossing that line?

Within months of accepting Jesus as my Savior, I often proclaimed Jesus to all I knew. However, as time went by, I became so isolated that I could not talk to anyone about my great passion, which is Jesus and all He did for me.

Seven years later, for a period, I wasn't exactly living as He wanted. I cried out to Him, asking what purpose my life had in Him. I was lead to what I thought an obscure place in the Word:

Exodus 3 verse 10: "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

I was awestruck. I prayed again and this was His reply, "Egypt stands for bondage and Pharaoh stands the things that place bondage upon His people.

So, in writing this book, I am trying to proclaim His freedom, the liberty from sin He gives. The freedom from every kind of bondage, be it rules or the past.

I have continued to pray for His guidance. Where I will fit in the big scheme of things still eludes me, but I know He wants me to

reach those that are his and equip them with His freedom, to be salt and light to my brothers in Christ. Something we are all called to do.

When Jesus heard {this,} He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

*"For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"*

But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own {homes} and followed You."

And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

Therefore, I wait upon the Lord to guide my path each day.

Praise to God



The might of God can be seen in the mountains.

The gentleness of God can be seen in the lily.

*The love of God is apparent in the face of a
newborn child.*

*The anger of God may be felt in the power of a
lightening bolt.*

*The forgiveness of God is in the blood given by
Christ.*

*The reuniting of God with us will be in the
marriage.*

His beauty is in the heavens.

*And the grace of God is in the rain which falls so
freely.*

The Bible



First, I would like to say that my hunger for God keeps me in His word and I read it through again every year. I do this for me - to feed me. Now, with that said, let me start.

In the first seven books of the Bible, we have creation, two baptisms, promise of eternal life, escape from sin, dying and rebirth. In the seventh book, we have leaders placed before us to judge and lead. Some were Godly men and some were not.

In the eighth book of the OT, there is the picture of the marriage to come between Christ and His church.

Nine through fourteen show our selfishness, which leads to a falling away from God. In fact, so much so that we searched after other gods, (I guess things haven't really changed much. We have a short memory always asking, "God, what have you done lately for us?")

In books fifteen and sixteen we see a restoration process start to unfold.

In the seventeenth book of the OT we have the intercessor introduced, another foreshadow of Jesus. In fact, if you go to Genesis you will see a reference to Jesus in the third chapter verse twenty-two, the tree of life. Jesus' coming is foretold throughout the OT Bible.

In book eighteen a kilning process begins, the heat is turned up and the dross removed. We see God is in total control, even when the imp is allowed (for he can do nothing without God's permission, [Job 2:6]) to act.

Books nineteen through twenty-one, we have praise worship, wisdom, and instruction.

In the twenty-second book, we see God's angst for what He has to do to draw us back to Him.

The twenty-third, the determination of His will.

Twenty-four, we see the weeping of man.

Twenty-five, we have the restoration promised.

In the twenty-sixth, we have the visions and steadfastness to do God's will, even to the point of death.

Twenty-seven through twenty-nine, we have guidance laid before us.

Forty thru forty-four, we have the great news, the promise.

In forty-five, we have the work of the church and bright flame.

Books forty-six thru sixty-five, we have the instruction to the new church.

In the final book, we can see the end, the victory, and the new beginning.

The Onion



Isaiah 55:9 "For {as} the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Ever wonder why the same verse means so many different things to people? I know I have. I know about the verses that say:

"If any lack wisdom, ask"; "and you will have no need for a teacher, for you will be anointed with understanding" and also, "I will write my covenant upon the flesh of their hearts".

So how can we see the same black pot so differently?

Our vantage point determines how we perceive His word. It is all about how deep we actually seek to go with Him into His word. As we grow in our understanding from mere babes to maturity, we peel away layer after layer.

We are all, if we are His, exactly where He knew we would be at this second and all on the same road. I was praying about a different matter and when that became clear, he showed me the onion analogy. Some seek to go deeper and others are only at the first layer. Is one more saved than the other? No, but one is definitely more useful. The deeper we go, the more layers that are peeled away, the more flavorful it becomes.

It is wonderful when we understand that we all are on the same road, just in different places. Even when we seem close, because of twists and turns, we may actually be miles apart.

God is truly awesome, for He gives us what we need and what we can handle only when the time is right. He will guide you and reveal Himself to you, layer by layer, as you grow.

May we never get so far ahead that we don't want to edify and encourage those at the beginning of the walk.

Dine in or Carry out?



I was thinking about why I write such short stories of God's mercy. How hard it is to feed a seven-course meal to people with fast food appetites! It is like going to Mickey D's for a Filet Mignon. You just are not going to get it.

I'm not sure if any of you like to bake and/or cook, but I love it - and I do it from scratch. Box mixes and TV dinners are ok when you are in a hurry, but there is nothing better than a meal prepared from fresh ingredients that take not only your time, but your love and skill as well. Just as with God, you get out what you put in.

I love cheesecake and make it with the best ingredients I can find. It is a time consuming activity - hours of preparation and then hours waiting for it to cool. A lot of work for something that seems to last only minutes! Nevertheless, the look on the faces of friends and family as they enjoy the fruits of my labor make it a real joy to me. I get much more out of it than they do.

Why are we so busy that we must have everything "quick"? You miss so much in life if you are always hurrying though your hours!

God has me in a unique place. He is my all and I have nothing more important to do then give Him my attention and time. In all I do, I not only see His glory; but stand in awe of His splendor and purpose.

Let me liken it to seeing a flower along the side of the road as you hurry home. You catch a glimpse of color, but miss the beauty of it, the fragrance, as your rush by.

If we took more time for Jesus and allowed His majesty to fill our lives, we might slow down enough to hear a child's laugh, or appreciate the painting of the sunset by God Almighty Himself. Slow down and allow God to speak to you and to work in you. You will never be sorry you allowed time for Him. You may even be surprised that you have even more time. Time to enjoy what He has given you, time to hold on to Him, and to hear His glory in a child's laugh or bird's song.

Spending A Day With Me



First, let me start by saying that when I told my wife my idea for this story, she spent 20 minutes laughing hysterically. I was praising God, seeking His direction for my life, as I usually do, when I thought of Elijah and the twelve that walked with Jesus. Not that I consider myself in the same league with them, but asking our Father if this was the direction He would have me go. The answer I got in return was not the one I expected. He suggested I be more along the lines of John the Baptist. My first thought... “Wait, he was beheaded!” Then He gently reminded me of John’s words....

He must increase, but I must decrease.

Jesus must increase in me and I must decrease! I pondered this for a moment and decided that once again, our Father was right. There is still a bunch of “me” occupying my body. Therefore, I need to work on getting the “old me” out to be replaced with the new and better “me”. For it is truly my prayer that when people see me, they see Jesus through me and it is this about me that they remember.

On another note:

While driving by a truck stop, I heard a person over the CB radio selling adult movies. He asked any takers to go to a certain channel on the cb radio. Well, being the man I am, I went to that channel (*not to purchase anything*), and I offered him a Bible. Instead of answering my question, He responded with this statement, “He didn’t stay on the truckers channel because he didn’t want to impose on those who weren’t interested in the movies he was selling.” I told him I had no problem with that, but asked if he wanted a better way. Well, he let me know he had no problems with what people believe, but to him what he was doing wasn’t wrong... just selling a product that he himself

didn't partake in. To cut to the chase, while I was speaking to him, no buyers came on the air. Apparently, I was interrupting business! I told him to have a great day and that I hadn't meant to interrupt him. He answered that it was fine and told me to have a good day also.

Maybe a seed was planted. Maybe another soul was reminded of his first love and turned away from temptation that day. I guess we all make choices of what we put in our minds - poison or nutrition. I love the food He offers!

Well that was almost my whole day. I did hear a man speaking this morning about how big our God is. As I drove this evening, I pondered this.

Therefore, I ask, "How big is God to you?" He created all, split the sea, and even defeated death! Even with that kind of power inside us, we seem so unable to use or connect with it. If Jesus were large in us, just think of the power - it would be incredible!

As I lay down to get some sleep, I want to thank you for spending the day with me and I pray that His power will be released in us all.

Perfect Love



This not intended to guilt anyone, but a just a simple question I am going to pose.

And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: {the} blind receive sight, {the} lame walk, {the} lepers are cleansed, and {the} deaf hear, {the} dead are raised up, {the} poor have the gospel preached to them.

Jesus, our glorious King, left the comfort of Heaven to teach us to walk after Him. He gave us sight to see, ears to hear and cleansed us from sin. He even told us how much He loved us and not just in doing these things, but as follows as well:

He gave us His heart in passing as well, so we would know how to love.

As they spat upon Him He said I love you...without a word.

As they punched Him, He said He loved us without a word.

As they pushed the thorns into His head, He again said I love you without uttering a word.

As they tore the flesh from His body, He said He loved us, without a word.

Each time the hammer drove the spikes into His arms, and legs He said I love you, loudly, without uttering a word.

He even forgave those who did these terrible things to Him!

Therefore, I come to this point,

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Notice the word “as”? It means “like”, so do we ask forgiveness as we forgive others? We need to forgive completely.

Now, back to my main issue. He showed us how to love, and how much He loves us. How do we show Him our love? It should be by loving the unlovable as we once were. The drunks and drug addicts, the children with aids and those who do unspeakable things; as we do to these - *the invisible*, we do unto Him, our King Jesus.

Remember He came not for the righteous, but for those separated by sin. Should we do less?

If we love by His example, there would be a light seen by the world that even they could not deny! We all fall short of that love... but we must keep trying!

*Father, You sent Him to show us by example. Enable us to love Him, by loving those whom You love. Let these tears be more than pity. Let them be for the lost You care so much for. You screamed I LOVE YOU by your actions. Please place those actions in me, so that by my actions, I say I love You, Jesus.
Thank You Father, Amen*

Thank You Father



Father, where do I begin to thank You for all that You have blessed me with? You alone know my heart, for it is You who gave it to me. I am blessed that You chose to save me, even when I was blaming You for all the bad things in my life. You knew the right time I'd be soft enough for You to enter. You alone give life, the kind of life worth living. I am not afraid to give it away, for by Your example I gladly follow. My old life was one I sought to keep, so thank You for giving me eyes to better see. Your Son you gave for my death penalty and not just mine alone, but for any who would believe.

How do I thank You Father and what can I give in return? You own it all and do as You will. My love for You is sadly limited and only given because You loved me first. My life You own. It is but a flash in time. I give You my praise and ask that You be glorified in me, so that the world may see I am Yours. That it is not even be me they see, but You shining in me.

Forgive my shortcomings and give me the desire to be more like You. Be glorified in all I do. Forget my yesterdays and my failures. Let me never forget the cross and the price paid by Your Son, Jesus. Let Your love be seen by the world, so that their thirst may be fulfilled by You.

Thank You, Father, for this new life given. Let me never forget that nothing I do can add or take away from the act of mercy You showed me. I long to see You face to face and until that day, I am Yours. Amen

Give it all Away



Do you truly know what freedom is? I mean the freedom that Jesus gives you. We all know that it means freedom from our past, sin, and death. However, don't some of us hang on to this life a little too hard?

His love, His mercy, and all the changes He made in me, for this, I give Him my life. Not even for the promise of the next life, for even if this is all there was, my love and honor for Him would remain. For you see it has nothing to do with what He will do any longer, but what He has already done.

If He wants to use me to glorify Himself and it meant my death, or even separation from Him eternally, I would gladly lay down my life for His purpose! Our Father has done such great things in my life and those close to me, that it is no longer just faith, but a reality. *The love of God who gave Jesus in our place.* Therefore, my life is His alone to do with whatever He chooses.

I am not sure you can understand that freedom, but, it is incredible to know that I serve and love a God not imagined by my imagination and have come to a point (*through His power*) where I know true freedom. For my serving and loving God in return has nothing to do with what waits ahead, but because of the newness of life He has given me. I invite you all along this journey. To live for Him as if there is no tomorrow and through this you will know the true sense of the word freedom.

Jesus, my life is Yours ' to do with it as You see fit. Amen

I give it all away for the One who came to save all. You are my king and I would love and serve You, even if this is all there was...Thank You.

nor will they say,

'Look, here {it is!}' or, 'There {it is!}' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.'

So, why look for what is in you?

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater {works} than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

When we come together His power is magnified, yet we do nothing, for the lie of the imp abounds.

However, if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Look at this power, I cannot say each will do great things, but as it is written in Acts, as they came together with one mind and great things happened!

Live as if Jesus is in you! Not for tomorrow, but for today. Then you will know true freedom.

Which Thief Are You?



This is a quirky topic I admit, but want you to seek the answer.

Jesus was crucified with a thief on either side; one was saved, but the other threw insults at Him. Are we the type of person that when the trials and hardships come ask, “If you are indeed God, why won’t you fix this thing?” It seems to be our nature to do so. For the most part, I can honestly say that I make no demands upon God. However, if I was hanging on a piece of wood with metal spikes nailed through my wrists and ankles, I cannot guarantee I would not make such demands.

If a child of mine was sick and only God could save them and they were not healed, would I lose faith?

*I've walked the valley of death's shadow
So deep and dark that I could barely breathe
I've had to let go of more than I could bear
And questioned everything that I believe
But still even here
in this great darkness
A comfort and hope come breaking through
As I can say in life or death
God we belong to you.*

This is a new verse written by Steven Curtis Chapman, who recently lost a daughter. You can see the distress he went through and the promises he questioned.

I hope I could be the one saying, “Jesus whatever the price, as long as you receive the glory!” Yet think I have a bit of the other thief in me as well.

*Father, even though You know our weaknesses, we ask that
You shore up these spots in our lives. Thank You for the
grace You pour upon us and may we never fall too far away
from Your love, Amen*

When God Says Look



As I was driving once again today and God asked me what I saw. I said, "A dead tree with a lush vine covering it". He then proceeded to tell me this was the lost of the world. They hold on to a dying world seeking its pleasures, not knowing they themselves are withering with the world.

They seem to have life, when all they have is an illusion - for they hold unto death... not the Tree of life, being Jesus. Pray for these that they may wake up before it is too late.

Even The Clouds



As I was driving one day, meditating on God and worshiping, He asked me, “What do you see?” I said, “Small clouds against a blue background” and I sought a deeper understanding. The clouds grow from in the atmosphere or dissipate when they run into a dry pocket. Alone, the small clouds do nothing but float in the sky. When the right conditions come together, the clouds grow into a huge cloud, producing shade and rain. The rain refreshes the ground and produces life - even the air is purified as the rain falls to the earth.

You see, we are like clouds. Alone we float aimlessly, some dissipating and some growing for a while until the dry pocket dissipates us. Together we are a force that can produce life and shade to a hostile world and chase the dirt from the air. The oceans, lakes, and ponds giving up their water feed the clouds. We have a deeper source, the creator of life itself, Jesus. We are fed with an unending source.

As with the clouds, if we would come together, we would create the perfect storm for the nutrition of life, (*through Jesus*). Still we try to go it alone...

Another thought, a single blade of grass does not make a lawn, but with a multitude of blades, becomes a luscious covering for the planet. In addition, a single tree isn't a forest, but many trees together do. Together they give shelter for the birds and creatures of this rock. Do you see the collation here?

Let me leave you with this....a thumb can not twist a door knob to open a door, yet with the help of the fingers, connected by the palm, the door can be opened. We are the body of Christ and yet we act alone. Think back to the church in Acts Chapter 2

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to

prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they {began} selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

We need to take a giant step back to the church described above. Together they had power and favor. Think about it.

Where is the Kingdom of God?



Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;

nor will they say, 'Look, here {it is!}' or, 'There {it is!}' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off {in protest} against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

You are wondering what is all this about. It is to help you understand that although Heaven is our home, it is not just a far away, by and by place. The kingdom of God was near when Jesus was walking the earth and now the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Hmmm, if a third of the trinity is in us and there is just one God, who cannot be separated, then is the kingdom of God/Heaven within you or not?

When we can accept this, we have moved beyond just being saved. Then the light of Jesus cannot be kept hidden - it will illuminate your world! I think I can say why it is that we cannot be of this world, but in it. For there are enemies, the imp has all the control here - the liar who blinds and holds captive. Even so, the light still shatters darkness, as the sun rises, the dark retreats.

So let me ask you, "Where is Heaven, and are you a citizen of this earth or heaven?" Does anyone else long for the Glory of

God to be seen by the world as in the days of Moses and Solomon, besides me? Imagine if just 100 people with a strong passion for Christ were together. Then the power of the resurrection, which dwells in us, could not be hidden.

In this place, this would also be true...

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

For we know God does not lie and we know He means what He says. Yet so many still seek a teacher to bring the word to them when the Word should live in them. I so love my brothers and sisters. Yet I feel so many want a small dose of Jesus, instead of all He has to offer them. I seek not to change anyone or the world. The only one I can change is me, through His power. Moreover, if I am changed, then I guess the world around me is as well. For it is hard to toss a pebble in a pond and after the initial splash, call the ripples to be still. May all His love and peace keep you and guide you as we journey this road together. Let the entire world see the light of Christ and let His kingdom come near to those we interact with daily.

Grace, undeserved favor. A point to ponder....

Freedom to Love



I will gingerly try to write this without offending anyone, and believe me, this is not my desire or purpose. A friend of mine, who happens to be pastor, told me his wife thought I must have been saved outside the church. He asked her why she thought so. She responded that I seemed too free.

Go figure!

John 8-36 "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

If He has made people free, why do some of them put yokes upon their necks again? People fall back into the bondage of doctrine and rules that they are told they must obey.

If I may sum this up with a single word, LOVE. If you love you fulfill the entire law, and all the teachings of Jesus. If you love God with your entire being and love you neighbor as yourself, then you will do no wrong to either God or mankind. Is this hard?

I love to worship and have with many different denominations that say you must *invite* Jesus into your life to be saved.

Revelation 3: 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

As Paul said, ***"If I have gifts and lack love, then I have nothing."*** Jesus taught about a Samaritan who helped someone beaten and left for dead. The Samaritan was called a true "neighbor". *Love alone is the sign you have Christ.* He came because of His love for us. He taught us that to lay down your

life for another is real love. It has nothing to do with saying, "Hey man, I love you", but rather getting your hands dirty at times. You may see a homeless person, take them home, clean them up, and feed them. This is the love that the world sees and by it, knows who lives in you.

I fall on my face at times and allow God to pick me up. Being free is so wonderful, for if you are truly free, you give it away. You give your time, money, and yourself.

It is not, however, being "rule" laden. It is not living by OT laws or even the Ten Commandments. It is not being saved by an invitational prayer, baptism at a young age, or receiving the gift of tongues. These are things we seem to do because we cannot deal with the fact God did it all. To be free, you must know that it cost you nothing, the price was paid. I guess its human nature to think we must add to the priceless work done at the cross.

When we were born the first time, we needed to learn all about the world and its' rules. To be "born again" is to let His work be enough.

In John 13 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Where is the outward sign that the world may see? So many denominations put their emphasis on things we do and not much upon the freeing affect love has on the individual. Yet it should unite us like super glue. (*Trust me super glue unites, fingers to all kinds of materials*)

I give thanks to God for my salvation coming in a one to one fashion, instead of in a church building. I could have been duped into believing I was saved, when in fact I may have said the right things, done the right stuff, yet never known Jesus.

As far as I can tell, the only outward sign that counts as far as being a radical born-again son or daughter of God is His love flowing through you. The rest is junk. The Bible is a love letter that shows God's long suffering love for us. With Christ in you,

how can it not shine fourth? If it is not in you...then you cling to the things you do. Love cannot be hidden! If we as Christians would allow Jesus to shine in our lives, imagine the light that the world would see!

Revelations 12 11" And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

Wow, love even overcomes the imp, if applied properly - not selfishly, rather selflessly. I hope this gives you something to ponder. Stop being yoked by rules and be free to love!

The Things We Struggle With



Have you ever caught yourself in a “before” Jesus action? One that you *knew* you would never commit after the conversion of the Holy Spirit took hold. So what do you do?

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.}

Wrestling: a) contest between two in which each endeavors to throw the other, and which is decided when the victor is able to hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck)
b) the term is transferred to the Christian's struggle with the power of evil

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Again....

I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

I guess my point is that when we struggle, it is not usually against another where we do hand to hand combat, but rather it is

internal; we fall back into a behavior that robs us of our peace. We are on a journey with Jesus and like children; we fall and scrape our knees at times. Paul says continue even when we find our hearts wandering to a pre Jesus state.

To die daily is an interesting concept here for me. How can we do this? If we were renewed by God's mercy, then to die a third time would be ludicrous. I take this to mean that we simply are giving every day to God's control, instead of to our own.

Whether the struggle is with an addiction, a behavior, or anything not glorifying God, it is a spiritual fight. I am not crazy about the terms demonic or satanic, but this struggle does come from the ruler of this rock, and that is the imp.

So not to be too long winded, let me try to wrap this up by saying this. *The more time we give to God, the less room in our lives we have for such things to rob us of the peace.*

{We are} destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and {we are} taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Again let me state that in spending more time with our Lord Jesus, the less our thoughts seek the things of the flesh. You occupy a finite space. You have two choices of what to fill that space with, one good, one not. It is your choice what you fill that space with.

"You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

It is not always the lack of time we spend with God that causes these struggles, for at times when we are closest to Him, the struggles seem worse. The remedy is simplistic...

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

When we struggle and if we fall, call out to Him - give God control over the situation. For even in the rooms full of utter moral decay, He is there, whether the room is literal, or figurative. I would suggest that at the time the struggle begins, we call on Jesus and give Him the situation.

***Calling on His name, the Lord knows how to rescue the godly
from temptation,***

Struggles stink, but there are part of the journey. If you notice, these battles will grow you. Take comfort in knowing, if you were not His, then you would be of no use to the imp!

When Floods Come



We have all heard of the great flood in the days of Noah and the tsunami of Southeast Asia that killed thousands.

"Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

These two verses, the first in Genesis and the other in Revelations speak of a flood and a flood yet to come. We can try to prepare for the literal flood, for we can see the signs of impending doom. The latter the one is spiritual and we are unable to see this as clearly.

I write this piece because I have a friend who encountered a flood that took his home from him. More importantly, it made him feel helpless. I know this feeling. I felt helpless when my family split up within a year of Jesus entering my life. This spiritual flood was devastating. Hopelessness swept over me like a dam breaking and lasted for what seemed like, years.

I can only imagine the loss of material things to water or fire. I know the hopeless feeling of loss. What, if anything, can we obtain in strength and/or learning from such a catastrophe? I know in my situation, when it seemed all was lost, I realized God was the only thing that mattered; He as the only thing left I could cling to.

It becomes so clear that the things you cling to at times clouded your view of God. Job lost it all and became angry. Most his friends were not to helpful, but God was still close to Job.

It is easy to say, “*Search for the silver lining in the midst of a storm or the rainbow God placed in the clouds*”.

Clichés are not what is needed in times of loss and pain. Comfort and understanding, help and aid are what are needed. God will show the lesson; what is to be learned from the pain. Our job is to be there as an extension of God’s love to those in need.

Father, I know You to be sovereign in all and Your purpose may not always be evident. Lord, let us be a stronghold for those hurting. We know You do not cause all things, but You knew it would happen before it did. Let us all find comfort in Your love in times like these and keep our focus upon You. Amen

From Carbon to Diamonds



Ever see the beauty of a diamond, the brilliance of the light refraction? Ever consider what it takes to make them so beautiful, the years of immense pressure? When you become God's you go through changes and like the diamond, sometimes pressure is exerted upon us to make us shine, to remove the imperfections if you will.

God will never leave His beautiful work unfinished.

{For I am} confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is a journey we began with our Maker, when He reached into our lives, He the potter, is molding you into a valuable vessel for His glory. I can guarantee you will not be sorry of the outcome.

However, as we all know, clay without the hardening heat of the kiln will crumble as it dries. The fire hardens it. Remember the three from the book of Daniel? How they were tossed into the fire and when they came out, they did not have a single singed hair, or the hint of smoke upon them.

But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.

So do not fear the trials of life. In fact, embrace them with joy! For if He didn't care for you, would He be making you into something beautiful?

Now I know you have an appreciation for silver, for it's value and shine, but have you ever seen it raw from the mines? It is full of impurities and the only way to cleanse the silver is melt it

and remove the dross. Take away the dross from the silver and there is the pure silver for the smith.

The first example I used was to reference the pressure we as Christians may undergo as we walk closer with God, for we are being made into the image of Christ.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined {to become} conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

The examples I used are a process we go through as the parts of old self are stripped from us. It may be painful at times, but necessary for His Glory.

God never makes us go through anything we cannot handle and although we may not like the fire at the time, when we look back, we see a shedding of a part of self that was not enduring. For we cannot be lights unto the world, if we are, in fact as they are.

Father we offer thanks that You take the time to mold us and craft us into things of beauty and honor, that the world may see Your Glory and Your hand upon those you call Your children, so that they may even come seeking You, Amen.

Count It All Joy



First, let me say that this is not intended to be aimed at anyone. I have just noticed the lack of joy in the face of God's children.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Don't the title and the first verse pretty much say it all? We as Christians are called to another level through Christ; one that is filled with amazing joy and peace. Not by our own power, but through God's power, in the form of the Holy Spirit.

So, are you lacking peace and joy? If so, may I ask you to examine the reasons you aren't. Sometimes it may be because God is trying to move you, but more often, it is because your focus is on the wrong thing, "self".

Is your peace dependant upon the things around you, the relationships you have, or is it dependant upon the relationship with Jesus?

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

What do these words of Jesus mean to you? Do you think He gave it to some or all who are His? I believe it is for all of us.

Is your focus is upon God and His power that dwells in you? If so, do you give yourself away to be an imitator of Jesus? Are you loving God with your entire being and loving your neighbor as yourself?

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

I take this to mean our heart is right when we empty ourselves to lift up another. Can you find peace in this, or does your peace come from things that are done for you? Is your eye upon God or in the mirror?

My peace comes from above and I love being able to hear the laughter of another, knowing joy is coming from them. Joy comes from above not from what you see. So, I ask you once again, do you not have peace because you are being selfish? Are you relying on what you can get through your own power? On the other hand, does your peace come from giving yourself away? Not being mindful of you, in other words, selfless? I ask you search for His truth, for He left you His peace and God never lies! Paul got it right:

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

And if you have trouble grasping this, recall this,

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If this does not bring you peace, then do an inventory of your heart. Count it all joy and the key word is **all**. May you find the

peace He longs for you to have and joy that draws the world to seek Him.

Hanging On



Some days are hard and feeling the love that captivated our hearts is hard. We have the things in life that non-believers have and they can get us cast upon jagged rocks if we allow them to. Situations and emotions can be used to put a wedge between us and God. Sometimes the problem or situation becomes our "god".

Our faith will be tested by many things - some of them by people close to us. We catch ourselves asking why have You allowed this to happen to me or why has this happened to someone I love? Job is our best example:

Job 2:1- 6: Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.

The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."

***Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.
"However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."***

So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

Alternatively, we can look at Psalms 139 verse 4

***Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD,
You know it all.***

God knows all, even before there was breath in us. The imp has no power, but that we give him, for even he needs God's permission to come against us. Remember the three who were tossed into the furnace? Or Daniel when he was locked in with the lions? Even Moses had his turmoil.

God's grasp on us is strong. It was made supernatural at the cross. The imp loves to toy with us and sometimes we grow through the experience. At other times, we just whimper along. Either way, God's love and promises are the same. When we cry out to Him in trying times, He knew where you were and what you needed before you even spoke

A final thought I would like to give you. Even when all around you are doing things that do not reflect the actions of a believer, remember, at times we all do things God would rather we didn't, but His grace, and blood covered it all. Allow Him you hold you and trust He is always there. Holding on to Jesus is nothing more then allowing Him to hold on to you. Stop trusting in your own power and know He remains in control.

When God Came Running



*"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.
Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

Interesting how I hear so many say they came to God when it was always God doing the chasing. When you read His word, He initiated the contact, in the OT as well as the NT. As it is with Jesus, He went to the 12 and then to Paul after His resurrection. We may seek a god, but God is the one seeking us. When God does reach into our lives and changes us, we need see it with humility and realize we had absolutely nothing to do with it!

I will be the first to let you know I do not even understand the why or how He choose to save me, but can remember it like it was yesterday! It was not via an alter call or sinners prayer, but it was a life transforming event. My prayer is that those who have done these things do not rely upon those acts for salvation, but rather in the evidence of your life changed. For words without an action are just words without life. If He came after you, you will see the change in you and the world will as well.

Carry His Cross



When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Don't you think Jesus was making a statement here? Although fully man, He was also fully God. Don't you think He could have mustered up the strength to carry this burden? Yet He let a passer-by to be pressed into service. Why do you think this is? Could it have been He wanted us to bear one another's burdens as the second verse says? Moreover, by this example He showed us what we must do.

We as followers of Jesus are to carry and lift up one another, yet we seem to keep to ourselves most of the time. Why does our love lack the evidence of a light so bright that it is readily seen by the world and drawing the lost to the very cross that set us free? I know at times I sound like a broken record, but they will know us by our *love for one another*.

Do people walking around in darkness see your light? I aspire to be just a simple donkey God can use as a mouthpiece as He so wills. By your actions, does the world see you carrying Jesus or just the load of another day? I only wish I could give you the joy, love, and peace He gave me! It is contagious....let it shine, let Jesus shine in you! *He commands your light to shine until His return.*

Listening to God



Cease {striving} and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up {with} wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

"Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you; O Israel, if you would listen to Me!

Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

These are just a few verses out of His word that lets us know we should listen to His voice. Not in just reading His word, but when we pray. How often do we busy ourselves afterwards with the business of our day, never giving God the chance to speak to us? Ever have a conversation with someone who did all the talking? Did you feel a bit put off, because you listened, but never got a chance to give your thoughts? Do you not think He yearns to speak to you? I know He does. It is a relationship and relationships are a two way street.

I cannot tell you what formula will work for you, but try to quiet yourself for five minutes a day after you pray. As this becomes easier, then try an hour during a quiet time of the day. You would be surprised at what He longs to tell you. If you gave no time for a loved one or friend to speak, how long would they feel liked or loved?

I will not drag this out, so let me finish up by saying, there are twenty-four hours in a day. If you claim to love God with all

your being, then can you not give Him an hour? My prayer for you would be that your love for Him becomes a verb, an action.

I'm Sorry



I was watching a beautiful sunset this evening. The clouds and atmosphere were just right and the sky turned a blood red. I was reminded of Jesus at the last supper.

In the same way {He took} the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink {it,} in remembrance of Me

I was in awe, for as I was driving, I could hear His voice. I started in by saying I am sorry, (for all my mess-ups), because He paid an awesome price for me and you. I could not even get the sorry out before His voice covered my apology with His words, "You're forgiven".

In the back of my mind, I was troubled. My apology was not sufficient... it seemed to me that God was saying, "If you are truly sorry, you would not do these things". However, He loved me and I was forgiven. It was a humiliating and humbling experience. He reminded me I was no better than the flock who wandered the desert for 40 years, except for the fact that I was forgiven.

We are but a piece of glass to Him and He can see our heart's motives. I asked what I could do to make it right. He just whispered come closer. For the closer you get under my shadow, the less you will fail.

I never understood the power of Paul's words until now.

"For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I {would} like to {do,} but I am doing the very thing I hate."

It hit me like a ton of bricks. It is my desire to be more Christ like, yet time and time again I fall short, I sin, which I detest!

Telling God I am sorry just will not CUT it any longer - those words seem to come excessively from me and fall from my lips without depth & real sorrow. Therefore, from now on, I will ask God to change my heart and take my weak points and fortify them.

Even though I felt flattened, just like a child who has messed up, it is all good, because my Father still loves me.

Thank You Father and give me the desire to change this day - to become more like Jesus, Amen

A Reflection of Me



They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

As here this woman was accused for a sin, and Jesus wrote upon the ground. I have heard it said that He was writing the Pharisees sin in the dirt, for they all in time left this woman. I am not sure I buy this analogy but if it were true He could still be writing about my past.

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

The reason I write this is for all those who seek others to judge, so that they feel better about themselves. I spoke with a person who attended a church where he was not accepted because of his appearance. Because he was judged unfairly, he left the church. I have even heard of people judging those in New Orleans after Katrina. Why do we do these things?

Every time I have such a compulsion, His gentle voice speaks into my heart, "If it is flaws you seek, to find go look in the mirror".

Is it fair that we look at others so harshly, when God could have done the same with us? I believe we are instructed to offer what was offered us, grace, and forgiveness. If I were writing a letter to the world it would not be about their bad behavior, but rather that I know a person who loves giving second and even third chances. Jesus died for all the worlds' sin; salvation comes through His grace and love.

I guess I would say to those who would take the position of judge upon themselves to look at this verse:

But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him {be the} first to throw a stone at her."

Isn't speaking badly about someone, even a stranger, like a slow murder? For the more these bad words spread, the more they begin to taint the way the rest of the world sees the person. If you feel compelled to judge, check out the mirror first. Judge thyself first! When you are perfect, then be my guest, you may even judge me. I love Jesus with all my being and He will be my judge, for He is already the author of my salvation and the giver of His love.

Witnessing



Witnessing: wit·ness·ing, v. tr.

1. To be present at or have personal knowledge of.
2. To take note of; observe.
3. To provide or serve as evidence of. See Synonyms at indicate.
4. To testify to; bear witness.
5. To be the setting or site of: This old auditorium has witnessed many ceremonies.
6. To attest to the legality or authenticity of by signing one's name to

How do we witness? Some believe we must always be proclaiming the name of Jesus, but I tell you, this just is not so! Being a blessing to another, by just saying hello and smiling at someone is a witness to the One who lives in you. I know many dear friends who encourage me all the time. By doing this, they are witnessing.

To be a witness means to live as Jesus wants, a reflection of Him if you will. Have you noticed the moon when it is full, how brightly it reflects the light of the sun? Well, should we be any less a reflection of the light from the Son?

The greatest opportunity to witness I ever had was a few years back. Two other drivers and I were speaking of God and His mercy on our CB radios. Suddenly, another driver chimed in and asked, *“If I slapped you on one cheek, would you offer the other?”* The Holy Spirit welled up in me. I told him what I drove, where I was and that I would stop and allow him to beat the tar out of me, if that would help him believe. He never responded.

After a few minutes, our little group was once again fellowshiping and praising God.

We are all not the same. God uses us to our abilities to encourage each other. This in itself is a wonderful witness. When the world sees our love they want what we have; isn't that a true witness?

May we all accept the grace and love of Jesus

Dependence Day



*And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches
in glory in Christ Jesus.*

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Independence:

1. freedom from control or influence of another or others
2. the successful ending of the American Revolution;
3. a city in western Missouri; the beginning of the Santa Fe Trail

Dependence:

1. The state of being dependent, as for support.
2. Subordination to someone or something needed or greatly desired. Trust; reliance.
3. The state of being determined, influenced, or controlled by something else.
4. A compulsive or chronic need; an addiction: an alcohol dependence.

See the contrast?

This Independence Day I am reminded of all my blessings. You know all the clichés: “I am proud to be an American”, and “God Bless America”. I have no qualms with these, yet feel that so many put too much emphasis on being American. I am blessed to be born in America and by all it has to offer, but I am proud of only one thing; that God saved me.

I am totally depended upon God and His blessings upon me. I don't say God bless America - rather God bless Your children.

Independence denotes needing nothing. My dependence on God makes me a child. One who relies upon God daily for all I have and need.

Admitting we need God on a daily basis and counting on Him for our needs to be fulfilled...

But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

A trusting, depended child - this is how we approach the Kingdom. May we all strive to become more childlike in our trusting of our Father.

Happy Dependence Day!

When We Walk In The Law



Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one {point,} he has become guilty of all.

This is frightening to me that anyone would try to recreate the law as a way to sanctification.

Sanctification

1. The act of making holy. In an evangelical sense, the act of God's grace by which the affections of men are purified or alienated from sin and the world, and exalted to a supreme love to God.
2. The act of consecrating or of setting apart for a sacred purpose; consecration.

As you can see below justification is not even keeping the law, but rather the evidence after faith, that the Holy Spirit is cleaning you, and making you into a new creation.

Justification

1. the act, process, or state of being justified by God
2. the act or an instance of justifying : vindication b: something that justifies
3. the process or result of justifying lines of text

How many do you know that would have you do something in order to show yourself worthy? The rules we engage in when we are saved are just a “pride thing” we must get past. Why is it that we must feel that we had anything to do with our salvation? It takes humility to confess sin to our Father, and that same

humility to admit we could do nothing to get to Heaven on our own.

We all take a certain pride in our work or home life, but when it comes to God, we can take no credit. Now let me take this a step further, suppose we give God all the credit for our home life and our ability to perform at work? Then we have the correct attitude, giving all honor and praise to Him that saved us! Grace is free, don't mess it up, for as the opening line states....

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Do We Really Trust God



What does trust look like? It is easy to say we trust something, but in actuality, do we?

Trust - assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something

Did Abraham trust ...?

He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

What about these three...?

"There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, {namely} Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter."

"If it be {so,} our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king."

"But {even} if {He does} not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

How about Noah...?

"Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.

I could go on and on, but will stop with this. Do you think Jesus trusted God?

And He went a little beyond {them,} and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Well you know Jesus went to the cross, so I would have to say that exhibited trust.

Now we see what trust looks like. So, what is it you trust?

Now the hard question, do you actually trust God? If He asked, would you be able to do any of the above? Could you do it?

So ask yourself, do you trust God, the maker of all and the author of perfection? We know that when we meet Him, if we are not perfect He will reject us. So trusting in the act given us at the cross had better be paramount. I know we have a tendency to trust in our own abilities. Search your heart, mind, and spirit. I make no claim to see what is in the future, but if we are in the end times, will you have the trust in Him to lay your life down? I pray we will all be found ready.

Why Do We Do The Things We Do?



All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives.

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, {but wait} until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of {men's} hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

When we do things with good intentions, sometimes it can be twisted. Our motives may be selfish – looking for a payback or to bring glory to ourselves. Sometimes this hinders God's will for someone's life even when we feel led to help. At other times, we are just following the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

This is a good thing to remember...

"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

For they who make loud noises to bring attention to themselves are doing so out of wrong motives.

There are 732 mentions of heart in the Bible, so instead of me picking and choosing to add here, let me just say this; He knows and searches our hearts to see who are His and HE created a new heart in us. He does this so that we may worship Him and do His will.

A child who goes to the neighbor's garden and picks his neighbor's prize roses to give his mom is not doing anything with wrong motives, but even though the child has the right motive in wanting to make his mom happy, he took what was not his to give. We can seek to do good, but still be wrong.

I test my motives before I act. Is this for me and my glory, or is it God's glory that I seek? Once I can answer this question, then I know He gave me His heart in this case. Search your heart for the motive when you seek to do a good deed, for God already knows the motive. May it all be for His glory.

Insanity or Insight



Last evening I did not sleep well; each time I woke, I asked God if He was trying to tell me something, so I prayed. This morning I was in a mellow mood and not knowing quite why I quieted myself, just trying to listen to His voice, and the words started to flow....

How are you running this race?

Talk about determination — even a broken leg couldn't keep this teen track star from crossing the finish line.

It was Claire Markwardt's last cross-country race of her high school career when she broke her leg mid-race, MyFoxCleveland.com reports.

"I was fine until about 200 meters away and then it started to hurt and then it cracked a couple times," Markwardt said. She tried to get up, but her leg broke again. "I knew I really couldn't stay there and I didn't want to let my team down and I had gone that far, so there wasn't really a point in lying there," the senior at Berkshire High School told the station.

So, Markwardt crawled to the finish line.

Imagine if we had this kind of fortitude with our race! You know we have an advantage - Jesus said He would carry us.

Another Point to Ponder...

Are you a fence sitter? Do you cling to this world's pleasures and wait to see if you straddle the fence well? Most fence sitters will eventually fall.

Along the same idea here, I would like you to search yourself and see if you are a pillar, or roofing tile. The pillars are grounded in bedrock, (Jesus) and the tiles rest upon them.

And Another Thing...

Are you an “I” or part of the body? I know we are individuals, but the “I’s” are the ones who seek all the attention giving nothing in return. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the “I” can be removed and made into a unified light.

Do you know the word of God, or the Word of God? I know it appears the same, but the little word is the Bible and the big Word is Jesus Himself. Anyone can use a scripture to make a point, but a relationship with the Word means you do not have a point to make. You just want to share what you have with another. I am so tired of hearing of those who raise cane about taking God out of this and that, and then those who want to take them to court for doing such. If you know the Word of God, it cannot be removed at any price from the individual, even if the word is removed from all public places. What ever happened to turn the other cheek? When did God ever need protection?

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

"If it be {so,} our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

so that the proof of your faith, {being} more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to

result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

for our God is a consuming fire.

I guess the question I have for you is this. Are you in the fire?

Could you in fact be as the three in Daniel - tossed into a fire for the love of God? I ask you to search diligently for the answer, for a time may come where you are asked to renounce God.

I will continue here with another question, can your light be seen by the world or do you hide it? It is time we take the basket off the flame Jesus ignited in us, so that no one we meet can deny the difference in us. We must stop letting this world beat us down into acceptance of it's' ways.

We are victorious in Christ, in fact more then conquerors. We have overcome death through Him! There are fellow Christians who cannot see Christ in each other! It is time we let the world know to whom we belong. Not by yelling, protesting or through legal actions, but by our love for each other!

Let your light be turned into fire that can be seen for miles! We know the Holy Spirit in us does not hide. He abides in us so that we may be a contagious hope for those seeking.

and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

May our Father be glorified and our Lord Jesus name be praised our actions. I know He loves us all and wants us to shine. Yes, I know we all stumble, but as the girl with the broken leg, we can continue the journey not allowing anything to stop us from completing the race!

Life's Struggles



I took a picture of the great Mississippi River as I sat waiting to be loaded. The river was high and the current was strong because it had rained a great deal. I watched this massive tug as it was pushing eight full barges of coal upstream against the flow. Use your imagination if you will, for Jesus said in Matthew.

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "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. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

So why then when we struggle with life do we sometimes forget this? We all face uphill battles at times and yet we bring most of them on ourselves. If we allow Jesus to carry us, as the tug is to barges, so we are to God.

The next time you feel the world crashing in or you feel as though your life is going down a river out of control, call on Jesus! Allow Him to take control and make the river of your life traversable once more. Not that the current will not be strong, but with our Lord Jesus in control, it will be easier. *There has never been a situation God cannot manage, so call upon Him.*

Mini Marts in the Desert



Moses took the children of God for a 40-year walk in the desert... It was not suppose to take so long, but the children of God continued to turn away and not obey the word of the Lord.

I write this because I notice many Christians walking in circles trying to figure out how to get through this life unscathed from today's problems. We concern ourselves about the troubles of this world, denying Gods ability to take care of us. Gas is too high, food is going through the roof, and our needs and desires take all our joy from our lives. Why? When the children of God went on the tour of the sand, did any run to Sam's or a Mini Mart? No, they complained and whined although God provided everything they needed. Food, water; the very shoes upon their feet never wore out.

If only we had such a God as they did! Wait a minute - we do have the same God! So, why after learning about the 40 years of circling through the desert don't we learn from them? Our lives could be so much more enjoyable and joyful if we allowed God, instead of depending upon self-reliance.

Am I saying quit your job and do nothing? Certainly not... *although it is a nice thought.* Maybe God is trying to tell you if you are struggling with your money or the concerns of this rock that just maybe you have too much and it has come between you and our loving God. Just maybe, He is saying let go of some of it and take His hand.

We are in this world, but are not suppose to be of it. Maybe that is the problem... We are too much of the world.

1st Samuel: {The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them }

And with this, they got a king and all the troubles that come long with having one. I suggest you read first Samuel 8 and you may find the reason for your woes there.

We all want things - things cost money! The larger, the more money; the more money it takes, the more you work and the less time you have for God. I guess it depends what you want to be the king of your life... God, money or you. I choose God. I choose Jesus to sit upon His throne in my heart. I trust Him for today, tomorrow, and eternity.

Polluting the Gospel



As I was driving down the road this morning, it was as though God was so close I could not feel anything except His heart encompassing me. It has been a while since I felt this close to Him. It was so wonderful, but as always after such an experience, I felt a bit drained.

I sought the reason for this wonderful encounter and the words, gentle and quiet, came "Carry me". Far be it for me to carry our Father, for He has laid it all down to carry our burdens. Then He explained, "Carry the Word". I know from John, Jesus was the Word who became man and in all of us we carry Him.

As I sought this meaning, He said, "They have polluted/perverted my word." Now mind you, I can do nothing by myself, but through Him, all things are possible. As a gentle breeze rushes over us on a hot day and we feel refreshed, after time with Him, it was clear as to the meaning of this encounter.

Many Christians have become like a pond that has no fresh water supply - stagnant. In His word, we are told to be imitators of Jesus. He came to give Himself away for all of us. In following His lead we become (as we are called to be) conduits of our Father's love.

Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments.

Jesus gave two.

And He said to him, " 'you shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

This is the great and foremost commandment.

The second,, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. This I command you, that you love one another.”

How can we accomplish this without God in us? We cannot, but with the Holy Spirit in us, we can. Look at a stream after the winters thaw. It is fresh, clean, and crisp. It gives life. As with us, if we empty ourselves He will refill us. If we hold on to all the things He gave us, if we do not share with others, we become stagnant.

So I ask you, are you giving yourself away? Or are you holding on to self and not realizing His promises? He commanded us to follow Him, but that is not possible if we cling to self. It is only by living in His word that the world sees Jesus in us.

Before Jesus, there were many laws to reveal sin. Now there is a forgiveness and life. Life so incredible, for in it the maker of all refills us. In giving yourself away, you gain true life and a freedom only God can give. As His children, it is no longer about us, but all about Him.

Give yourself away... Then watch how God refills you with Himself!

The Sighted Man's Plight



As I travel about this world, I see a common thread in humanity. We are all trying to teach a man who was born blind to see the color red and become frustrated and angry when he cannot see what we see.

This is true not only in religion, but politics and in everyday life. We need, for our own self-importance, others to see things our way. We feel significant when others validate our belief.

The one thing I can tell you for sure, if you do grab your Bible to try to get someone to see your point of view, that person is liable to avoid contact with you. I can recall being beat in the head (bible thumped), with it before I came to know Jesus and it gave me a headache. I do not know about you, but if given enough headaches, I find the reason for them and then I avoid it. How can you then be a reflection of light when the other avoids you?

We cannot be another's conscious, nor can we be another's Holy Spirit. For in trying to do so, we hinder God from working. We need to count the difference in one another as the facet of a precious gem, not all the same, but equally valuable. If we count another's value as more than our own, they, being respected and valued by us, are often more than willing to listen to our point of view! Let me be a bright full moon, reflecting the love of the Son!

Never slam another for seeing things differently! The next time you feel the need to try to teach a blind man the color red, instead, bring a rose, and allow them to smell the beauty of creation. We will never all be the same. I count this as a blessing. The wisest men I know do not expound their wisdom, but rather listen.

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt I have someone who knows me and loves me. His name is Jesus, but for me to try to convince you by brow beating you, would only serve to push you away from Him. So I allow the Holy Spirit to do His work and I will do what He commands...love you to the best of my ability.

The Second Touch



And they *came to Bethsaida. And they *brought a blind man to Jesus and *implored Him to touch him. Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see {them} like trees, walking around." Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and {began} to see everything clearly.

This is the only time in the Bible where Jesus touched a man twice to make a healing complete. In fact, there are many instances where Jesus never had to touch them, but by a word, it was done. I would like to explore this passage.

One time we are told that Jesus was in His hometown and because of their lack of faith, He did few miracles. Is this to mean that He could not do what He chose? No, but rather, He would not act against a person's will, so few miracles were done.

I feel (*Please, do not take my word for it, Check the Bible.*) it is to show us the kind of blindness we have as adults. This man could see at one time. As children, we were closer to God in many of ways. Then the world, for whatever reason, blinds us to Him and we go astray. When we seek His touch, He does not withhold it. On the contrary, He wants to reclaim the lost! His first touch brings back our sight as we search for Him. But, if we are not careful, we may see things twisted; not as they actually are.

Let me try this analogy, when we hear of Jesus we may think we know about Him, but it is not until we see Him for who He is that we can truly accept Him, and have our sight restored. To

gain sight is a miracle in itself, but to gain life in Jesus is nothing short of miraculous.

Have you been touched by our loving Savior Jesus, but refuse to come to Him? Ask for the touch that gives sight to see Him for who He is and what He has done. You will not want the world any longer, but will long to draw close to Jesus. In that you will find you have it all, including your sight to see what matters.

To Sow



"The sower sows the word.

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

I was reading Mark and this really caught my eye: ***the sower sows the word***. As I further searched out this passage, a similar verse in Corinthians came to mind. How do we sow the word, Jesus, to a world in need? Do we throw out Bible verses; do we shout fire and brimstone? Or rather, is it in your actions, the way you live your life?

I know you all have heard the same things I have. Threats of fire eternally burning you in the next life for every wrong you commit. Those never made me want God... just the opposite, in fact!

I have been asked several times why I am so different. My normal response was always, "What are you talking about?" Then they would tell me they saw in me something they do not see in others. It is evident in me from what I have been told and I always tell them that it's the One in me that they see. It is not about me at all and I usually tell them the story of my conversion.

It is not magic; it is not even anything I had control over. In fact, it is when I gave up control that the seed took root in my life and grew so that others could see the sprout.

The world can see the truth - it is evident. Sowing becomes easy when the fruit is seen, for the hungry seek after good food. When they see it, they reach out for it, as it has been in my case.

So when God sowed the word in your life, which soil type did it fall upon? My prayer for you would be this:

Father You know the hearts of Your children, continue to cultivate the soil so that Your word, Your son, Jesus grows into fruit seen and craved by the lost. Amen

Accidents Or Divine Appointments



As I was driving around the Washington D.C. beltway the other day, I was involved in an accident. A young woman driving a mini van had just gotten on from a ramp and traffic was at a standstill. She wanted to proceed, so she swerved over three lanes of traffic to the one that I occupied. I swerved to miss her, but had a car to my left. As I put that car partially on the shoulder of the left side of the road, this young woman and I collided. As her van hit me, her driver side mirror was torn off and my rear tires contacted the side of her van. Thankfully, two windows blown out and a tire mark on the side of the van were the extent of the damage.

After calling the police and my safety department, I went to check on her. Physically she was fine, but she was extremely distraught. She apologized repeatedly through her tears. I asked if she was a Christian and she responded yes. After asking her permission, I prayed with her.

Afterwards I assured her God had His hand on her, for the accident could have been so much worse. Her father showed up and began to calm her down. Before taking her home, he said what this young woman and I already knew... that we were blessed.

I ask that you pray for her for I know God has something mighty in store for her.

The next time something happens that could absolutely ruin your day turn it into a blessing. Because of this ordeal, the officer gave me a level 2 DOT inspection, which I passed. I am paid \$75.00 for each level 2 DOT inspection I pass!

Blessings are abundant, but we sometimes miss them in the things the imp would have us tied down in. Later this same day, I was fortunate to meet and see the light of Christ in yet another person. While waiting inline for our food, we glorified God. Another blessing!

God never has an accident, only divine appointments for us. Watch for them - they are around every turn.

May His Holy Spirit guide and protect you in all you do.

As A Child



As I was pondering about God and all the goodness that He pours out on us, my mind began to wonder. I imagined myself as a young child, holding onto a hand. It was the hand of Jesus. I was looking up, smiling at Him, and we were walking in a path lined with trees along a stream.

As my gaze widened, I saw a multitude of children holding hands with each other and Jesus. We walked, listened, and were all smiling as we took this stroll. I know it was just in my mind's eye I saw this, but the verse telling us that we must enter the kingdom of God as children flooded my head. It was almost too wonderful to put into words. For if this daydream has any merit, we will all be children in His kingdom..., and an awesome time it will be! No sickness or pain. My spirit and renewed body will be that of a child's running on an early summer's day. To sit, to run and play with all the joy of youth, and to listen to the One who carried us through this life will be so incredible!

As I pondered this thought, I was reminded that this joy is what should fill our lives here. How can the world see us, or tell us apart from any other, other than from the smile on our face and the laughter from our hearts? It yearns for a way to follow, and by our light Jesus can be seen, and will shatter the darkness, and light the paths of many. May we pray that this life given to us, be radiant to be seen, and allow our joy to be complete as Paul's was knowing that the God who saved us, is with us now, an awaits for us in Heaven. Let us live as though we have entered into heaven, for if you are His, you are truly there already. Give Him praise, and honor, and may He be glorified in all we are and do.

Father, we give thanks for the love You surround us with, may we not forget this gift, and may the gift given us be seen by the world, and our brothers, and sisters so we may know each other.

*May we love the world to the point of surrender as You did us.
Let You well up in us to the point that we can not contain it, let it
bubble over into the lost, let it become contagious and without a
cure, may Your great love be seen by those walking in the dark,
seeking You. Amen and Amen. Thank You, Jesus.*

Aspire to be like Jesus



Our Father is so kind, and thoughtful. He is always ready to speak if we will only allow it. As I have mentioned before, I was speaking to Him, seeking His direction for my life. I thought about Elijah and of the twelve that walked with Jesus. In His infinite wisdom, He responded that maybe I should try to be more like John the Baptist. Think about it now, Jesus had this to say of him...

"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen {anyone} greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Big compliment from our Savior! John had it right, for he knew it was not about him. He knew he must decrease, so that Jesus would increase. Do we have that heart? Or is it still about self? We say we follow God and seek His blessings, yet this verse screams out for our attention.

"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done {only} that which we ought to have done.' "

When our hearts are right we live and act as if we are happy to have the privilege of being allowed to serve God.

Just imagine how lucky and honored we are to have such a God - who loved us enough to die to pay our debt. I pray we never make it about us; that we keep it all about Him and what He has done.

Let me finish this with a prayer.

Father, we humbly seek Your face so that we may serve each other and to allow the world to see You. We know You love us

even when we fall, yet we seek to be lifted, and made into Your likeness. We offer thanks and praise for the blessings we have receive, and seek to do not only what we are expected, but all You have empowered us to do. Allow Your Holy Spirit to finish the work and to guide and guard our steps, to do Your will. We lay ourselves down at the cross, and ask You accept the self we are and make us into the light You seek us to be. As John said, allow us to decrease, so that Jesus may increase. We thank You and ask that You speak to us as we quiet ourselves to hear what You want to say, Amen

Can We Break God's Heart?



I heard a radio pastor say that when he is caught in a temptation, he sees God's heartbreaking and it keeps him from committing the act. After some time pondering this, I concluded that this is a false statement. If in fact, this verse is true....

*Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD,
You know it all.*

So if God knew it all, then how could His heart be broken? That would be like saying He was surprised by our actions. He reminded me that in order for me to have the ability to break His heart, He would have to relinquish control to a knucklehead such as me.

However, I find it also interesting that this teaching was used for making us feel guilty; which is wrong. Guilt and condemnation is from the imp, for as this verse states

*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in
Christ Jesus.*

So guilt comes from the imp and is not of God.

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses
surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and
the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with
endurance the race that is set before us,*

For even when we fall, we get up and continue as an Olympic runner does. When he falls, he does not lay there; he gets up and finishes the race. When we allow the imp to convince us that guilt and condemnation come from God, our light is squashed.

So, run on! Even when you fall, get up! Finish the race, for it's not God you hurt when you mess up, it is your testimony! Seek His forgiveness and show the world that although you are a flawed individual, the difference is that you are forgiven! Give praise to God, dust yourself off, and get on with the race!

When Jesus Is All You Have, Is It Enough?



I write this from experience. I have had plenty at times and at others, I've had very little. The most blessed times in my life were when I had little, for not only was Jesus enough, but *more than enough*.

I heard people say that when you are doing well, faith is easy to maintain. I have heard others say the exact opposite. A well-known author said when he was dirt poor; clinging to Jesus was his hope. When he became rich, he did not see the need for Him.

Back to my story...

When Jesus came into my life I was blessed with a wife, a home, and three children. I thought, "How could things get better now that God had come to join us?" Well, something did not like the fact I was so blessed, or I was being refined as gold, because my family fell apart. This was the hardest time in my life, but Jesus saw me through.

Some time later, I ventured to Colorado. I found out that this was the one of biggest mistakes I could have made, but God allowed me to chase this folly. Well, with only \$500.00 in my pocket, my Bible, the clothes on my back and in the dead of winter, I set out back home to North Carolina on my motorcycle.

All I had was God. It was frigid and the ride a long one from Colorado. Upon arrival in N.C., I got my old job back and even my old apartment. I had nothing but a cushion to sleep on and my Bible. When I was paid a few times, I purchased the essentials - cooking and eating utensils and a compact stereo. I was more blessed at this time in my life then ever before, because I had no distractions to keep me from God. It was incredible!

It seems that the more stuff I have in my life, the more cluttered my mind becomes, things that come between me and God. The things that come between you and God... If He took them away, what would you do? Would you be disappointed with God or view it as an opportunity to get closer to your Creator and Savior? He longs for our companionship. He wants to be your everything. You would be amazed at how well He becomes enough for you.

A final thought... Hitler, Osama Bin Laden, Attila the Hun and (insert your name here). What do all these have in common? God has no favorites; He loves us all the same. Rather humbles you doesn't it? *Besides which, if He had a favorite, my wife assures me that it would be her!*

To Sow What?



Talent:

- 1) the scale of a balance, a balance, a pair of scales
- 2) that which is weighed, a talent
 - a) a weight varying in different places and times
 - b) a sum of money weighing a talent and varying in different states and according to the changes in the laws regulating currency

- 1) the Attic talent was equal to 60 Attic minae or 6000 drachmae
- 2) a talent of silver in Israel weighed about 100 pounds (45 kg)
- 3) a talent of gold in Israel weighed about 200 pounds (91 kg)

To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

We all know the parable of the talents. Let me see if I can explain the double meaning here....

We all can agree here that this spoke of gifts we are given to use for the glory of God. Now let me show you the other meaning. Some like to apply the principle of sowing money so that they can get a large return. They take from the parable of the sower and the seed, which we all know, means the word of God. PERIOD.

Jesus did however speak often of money and said we cannot serve both money and God. Yet some would believe that sowing capital into different ministries will bring a huge windfall back to

them and some preachers expound upon this. Following God's ministry, it will bring rewards, but they are the eternal kind.

I like the above parable and explanation of what a talent is. Remember the parable, the king came back and asked what was done with my money? Two out of three did what was right and increased what had been given to them. But the last servant buried the money and earned nothing for his master. This is what happens when we sow money as seed expecting a windfall. The only thing this kind of sowing does, is irritate God.

A final thought, God does not need money - He owns it all. Give it away if you have a surplus, and then again give *you* away to those in need. In this God is pleased.

Who's Eyes?



Whose eyes do we use to see the world - even fellow Christians? We are a judgmental people and with no good reason to be. I do believe the very flaws we tend to pick out in others are the ones in ourselves we hate the most. We need to use His words as a micro blade upon ourselves. Do you not believe this verse?

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

As Jesus taught, we should be allowing His word to change us and allow the Holy Spirit to do its' job. I really love this verse, but we never seem to apply it.

"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

It is quite clear Jesus intended us to allow ourselves to be changed. He already knew the helper would come and clean house in us.

But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him {be the} first to throw a stone at her."

Gee, I think the mirror is where we need to spend more time! When we see more Jesus in us than self, we are well on the road to where He wants us.

Grace



What can I say about God's grace, that you do not already know? It is an undeserved blessing from God, freely given.

I heard a radio program the other day on grace. Jesus upon the cross said, "Forgive them", as did Stephen when he was stoned.

When we fall, He does not chase us away. By grace, He forgives us and draws us back to Him. As Peter was comforted by Jesus after the resurrection and drew him near, so it is with us.

I was just in awe as I heard these words spoken over the airwaves. Imagine being able to give someone who does wrong, a blessing. We are instructed to do so, yet we, at times, fall short. Our Father's grace is so amazing - just as the song states. We seem to run from God when we mess up and that is not what He wants. He wants to let us know its okay, then to give us instruction how not to do so again. The next time you fall, get up, and run back to Him. He will comfort, guide, and love you all the way back to where you need to be.

GRACE: UNDESERVED FAVOR

Prayer



I recall a time when God first came to me that I would spend at the very least 4 hours a day praying. I remember how it felt and how close I felt to this very loving Father we have. The talks would be just as if I were talking to a friend, not just a repetition of words.

There was a time when a woman that I was close to had cancer. She was afraid and looking for hope. I went to God, crying and spilling out my heart to Him, reminding Him of His words, “ask anything in my name and believe”.

"In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.

The date of her surgery, I fasted and prayed all day long. When the doctor came out to speak to the family, they were shocked. The diagnosis was not as bad as he had feared. In fact, he was amazed that the cancer was so much less widespread than the tests had shown. I thanked God for the wonders He did that day.

This was many years ago and she is still well and has even begun to ask about our God.

I love God very much and miss the closeness and intimacy of those days. I still talk to Him daily, but at times, it is difficult. He remains close and I know it is I who at times feels disconnected. Even so, I struggle to get to that point where we spoke as friends, for hours a day, and not just when things get difficult.

The Church



Let me begin by saying that the church is not a building you go to. We, the believers, the body of Christ, are the church. All the denominations and big spectacular buildings are for us; not God. Solomon had it right.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"

Yet we still build, for the glory of us. If it were for His glory, we would still be meeting in houses and the money spent would be distributed to those of our family in need

We are the church and it is time we break the walls that divide us down. We need to come together and become that great light on a hill, instead of worrying about denominations and bigger buildings!

Do I think a perfect world will happen here? Not in any sense of the word, for I know the ruler of this world and he is not of my God, but we can make a real difference. Want to change the laws on abortion, invite one of these women into your lives, help with the bills, and help her consider all her options, such as adoption.

Want to change the world? Be a good neighbor, like the Samaritan who went out of his way for a stranger. Be a reflection, not of self, but of Jesus. Then the world will see the true church!

Gifts of the Spirit



*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.
And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.
There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all
things in all {persons.}
But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the
common good.
For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and
to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;
to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of
healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of
miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the
distinguishing of spirits, to another {various} kinds of tongues,
and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

(Not to be confused with the fruit of the Spirit)

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such
things there is no law.*

We tend to place a great deal of value on the outward signs of the gifts, i.e. tongues, healing, in some cases a circus atmosphere takes place. Jesus never operated this way, in fact when He healed, He instructed people not to tell. The Holy Spirit is a wonderful comfort, guide and most interwoven part of God to us.

I recall the day I came to Jesus and all the wonderful changes He performed in me. In fact, I visited many churches trying to find more of God. I thought that a church would have the right formula for what I was seeking. I went to one where tongues were the sign you were truly saved. I did not have the gift, so I sought it with all my heart. I even had a woman pray over me and got disturbed when the gift did not manifest itself!

I do believe the gifts are still around and are to be used quietly - not drawing attention to the vessel, but to the creator of the vessel. I have prayed for healing once and it occurred. I even tried to walk on water, but got all wet. *I am glad our Father has a sense of humor when it comes to me!*

About 3 months ago, a strange and wonderful thing happened while I was praising Him. A strange language started to manifest itself in my mind. At first, I tried to quell it, but then let it go. It was not the type of stuff I hear on the television or in some churches, but Hebrew sounding. I did what anyone would do to check his sanity; I wrote down the words that came (phonically of course), and then did a search for the translation. It was not gibberish and at times, I can still pray in a Hebrew dialect. I have no understanding of the words, but trust God in all. As Paul said, *“Seek the gifts, but seek love first”*.

Peculiar



But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

This is how our Father sees us. But, does the world? If we are called to be apart from the world and saved from death, why are we hard to distinguish from the world? I ask these things because the world should be able to tell you do not belong to it any longer, but are living in the Kingdom of God. Light breaks up darkness. The darkness hides from the light.

People call me strange and I can live with that. Some even think I am nuts and this I handle very well. I wear this peculiar badge with honor. That God, even after all I use to be, called me to be His.

People have asked me if I am on something, (*I guess they mean drugs*), because I am always happy, offering a smile and word or two. I reply that I am in fact on something and it is the best thing I ever had! I am high on the Holy Spirit. So far, I have received good responses to this answer. So, I guess you could say I am peculiar and the world can see that I am - I no longer belong to it.

Thank You Jesus for allowing me to shine for You in this place where I sojourn for a while! Never let me blend in so that I may feel accepted. To be received by the world is to be rejected by You.

So, are you a "stand out", or does the world see you as one of its own?

I seek out the stranger here for fellowship, for where two or more of us are, so there is Jesus as well. Let us show this world Jesus! Let them long for what we have.

I would rather be an on-fire "knucklehead" for God over a run of the mill, average "Joe", any day of the week. Come on family, let us be strange together! Let us be the biggest fruitcakes this rock has ever seen!

Just How Much Like God Are We?



God said, “*He would create them in our image*”, spirit of course, not the physical. Consider the power that dwells in you, for if He created you in His image, then something of Him remains in you.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

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

logos

1) of speech

- a) a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea
- b) what someone has said

1) a word

2) the sayings of God

3) decree, mandate or order

4) of the moral precepts given by God

5) Old Testament prophecy given by the prophets

6) what is declared, a thought, declaration, aphorism, a weighty saying, a dictum, a maxim

I want to pound this home. We have the same life giving or destructive power in us. When we speak life we edify, compliment and love. When we speak destruction, we gossip, get angry, and insult.

We have the God given ability in us to give life, yet we seldom use it.

And the tongue is a fire, the {very} world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of {our} life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; {it is} a restless evil {and} full of deadly poison. With it we bless {our} Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come {both} blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening {both} fresh and bitter {water?}

Do you see the point I am trying to make? God is love! He by His word created life! Even our thoughts carry the same weight and it filters down into our hearts. It is what comes from our hearts that we will be held accountable for. I guess what our Father was showing me is this. This power, this likeness to God, should be used as a balm to the world, not a blowtorch.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter [any] thing before God: for God [is] in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few

Our father is merciful and slow to anger. So why, if He dwells in us with His fullness in the form of the Holy Spirit, do we cause death, not only to the unsaved, but the body itself?

Next time you have an unkind thought or word, ask yourself, whose life are you taking? Give life as He gives to us so abundantly and it will be returned to you!

When Bad Things Happen



Why is it when bad things happen, we get so bent out of shape? God is in control at all times, even when the bad things happen. When something goes awry, I have learned to seek God out and ask Him, "What is it You want me to see in this?" You never know; He may be protecting you from something or has something better planned for you. Here are two verses that should not only help, but give you comfort....

"As for you, you meant evil against me, {but} God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose.

So does it really matter what the circumstance you find yourself in? The situation is in God's hands; your attitude is in your control. Next time something unexpected hits praise God and seek His position on the matter. He may be trying to tell you something, or prepare you for something. The imp loves to use our circumstances against us. Are you going to allow the imp to rule or trust God knows what is best for you?

So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

God not only loves you, but remains in control.

Search Your Heart!



As I was spending time with God today, a heavy realization became clear to me. I was saddened and became weak as Daniel when God showed him a vision. The truth or realization if you will was this. *If the Kingdom of God is not apparent in your life, you will never see it on the other side of death. Stop looking for heaven over there, in the by and by, for it dwells in you.*

I am not sure if this is a faith issue or not, but I am sure that many think they have it and do not. Are you in His kingdom now?

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;

nor will they say, 'Look, here {it is!}' or, 'There {it is!}' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Jesus was speaking of Himself dwelling among them for the time, and they had missed it, for they sought it far off, in the by, and by. Who is dwelling in your midst now? Jesus, or still that old self you have convinced by a prayer that you are a new?

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

It is written that we all fall short of His glory and this is why Jesus had to come. However, do you really believe or just go through the motions of faith?

My heart is so troubled when I think of what God has shown me. How many are just going through the motions and missing the grace and salvation Jesus died to give us?

When We Breathe



When we were born, we did not need to be taught to breathe. It was instinctive when we gasped our very first breath. I often wonder why so many, who claim Jesus as their King, have trouble breathing. What I mean is this, as with our first birth, we just breathed, so it should be the same with our *new* birth, the trouble is what we breathe. Are we still breathing in the world, or have we in fact, begun a new life?

You do not see the air, yet you inhale it and it sustains your very life. The same is true with God. You do not see Him, yet He sustains you.

What is it you breathe in? The word written, spoken, or heard or the junk the world still offers you. When we are born again, we have a hunger to seek nourishment and God gives it to us.

When you claim to belong to someone, have a relationship with someone, you get to know them. The closer the relationship, the more time we spend with them and the more we learn about them.

With our loving Father, this is all too easy. Not only did He give us the Bible, HE gave us the Comforter in the Holy Spirit. Are you allowing the Holy Spirit guide you, or do you fight it tooth and nail every step of the way?

Our God is so awesome, He gives us all we need, and it is not hard if we allow Him to work.

Breathe people! Inhale the glorious love of God and exhale the junk place in you by the world.

Do We Screen God Out



“You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”

I use this verse because it speaks of those who would use law to put others down. The Pharisees rebuked Jesus and the 12 who followed Him because they did not wash their hands, remember the story?

Now I ask you a question, do you have screens keeping God out of your life? I speak of things in your life that come between you and that special relationship. I am speaking of worries, cares or even joy brought by things that keep your mind and heart off God.

Do you have screens up to keep some of what our Father has for us out? You never know what God may use these things for, yet we keep the screens on our window.

I often wonder why I do the things I do and I got such a wonderful visual today. I gave a brother a truth and as soon as I did, I could see the imp cringe... for he is the teller of all lies, and he wants you to buy into them. God is so great for He allowed me to see this wonderful thing.

WOW, I have a much better picture now of why I speak of God - His love and grace. He not only allows me to do so, but it also allows God's grace to free people from bondage... and it really irks the imp.

Take the screens down and allow God in all the way. The mess on the floor is temporary, but He reigns forever.

Empty Shells



As I drive around this country I see many wonderful sights and some not so wonderful. Ever drive along a road and see a burnt out building or one abandoned with the windows broken out?

I pondered upon our merciful Father and am reminded of His son, Jesus. By trade, He was a carpenter and worked with His hands until about 30 years of age. Imagine if these buildings had a caring carpenter to work on them. In the same way our Savior seeks to work on these empty shells of life so many walk around with. To be filled with Jesus is to chase away the emptiness of self and the world. If you know someone who is just an empty shell of a being, I ask you not to preach to them, but by your actions, introduce them to the one who can fix their condition.

See yourself as the primer that the coat of paint adheres to. In our lives, they see the work of the Carpenter and through our love, the doorway to restoration is opened. Try a simple act of kindness on someone you know needs a loving touch.

A point to ponder....

And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

Next time you see a thunderstorm with grand flashes of lightning, know someone is doing the will of God and the imp is not happy about it. So, have you made the imp unhappy today?

The Fight Within



But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

Although subdued, we have always had two natures within us the flesh and the spirit. Until we meet Jesus, the battle was limited, for the spirit followed after the flesh and its desires. For at one time, all appeared right to us. Since meeting the Savior Jesus, the fight rages in us, for the flesh is weak and loves self-pleasure.

This was made very clear to me while listening to a radio show. I had the one channel that was being bled into by another channel. I was listening to two different radio shows, neither clear. At times in our walk with Jesus, it seems as though we come to plateaus and complacency sneaks in. When this happens, we sometimes feel that God is not very close and the flesh wages war. It is in these battles that we grow, for even when we fall down and are bloodied, we soon realize the cost and allow God to pick us up.

Paul stated that he did the very things he detested and yearned to do the things he failed to do. I think this is true with us also. We know what is right, yet we do the wrong things. The imp would have you believe that you are no longer worthy to be a child the King, yet Jesus tells us otherwise. He came to die for ALL sin, even those we may commit years down the road. I know that the battle has already been won if you are His, but at times, we may not be so sure.

In these battles, remember the word is like a two edged sword. It can cut out the infected part of flesh that seems to be rebellious. Call on Him when tried or tested, and know the Word. You will be amazed. When it lives in you, it can cut an infection out before it spreads to the entire body.

Next time the flesh begins to rear its ugly head remember, the price paid for you was costly. May God make all your battles little and your walk strong for He has conquered!

*Father when the trials come make us strong to endure and when we become weak, let Your grace cover us. To You be the glory.
Even when we fall, may we learn from our mistakes. Amen*

The Fig Tree



Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went {to see} if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening.

As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots {up.}

*Being reminded, Peter *said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered."*

Even though it was not the season for the figs, Jesus sought to eat of the tree and when it showed no fruit, He cursed it and it died.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

So when He returns for us, will there be fruit in your life? The walk with Jesus brings fourth fruit without end. We should make this fruit available for the world to partake in. We are a reflection of His love and this should be evident to all who know us.

I cannot see into anyone's heart, nor would I want to do so. And I do not judge, for it will be taken care of. But my question to you is this. Why, if you know Jesus, do you not have the evidence in you?

No one knows the time of His return. But... as with the above fig tree, when He came upon it and it showed no sign of fruit, He

cursed it. I pray that when He comes for you, or you go to Him, your fruit is apparent.

And He {began} telling this parable: "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

"And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any.

Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'

"And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, {fine;} but if not, cut it down.' "

So before He returns and withers up all who have no fruit, we as the vineyard keepers should be about the business of lifting up one another - in edifying and guiding others so that they bear fruit. Imagine if our Lord came back and you have no fruit, because no one had bothered to tend you, to nurture you, so that you had a yield to show? Let us be about lifting up one another, making us worthy.

Are you ready? Will He accept you or make you wither up?

What He Shows You Yesterday, He Hides Today



I will start by saying that forgiveness is something I seek, for this morning; I prayed that He use me. Also, that He sends someone my way and that I am willing. Well He did just that - four in fact. Two I blessed. With two, I missed my chance to glorify God. At times, He will give us what we ask and we fail to heed the call. This ties into the following....

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?"

I guess in this verse, I better be prepared to do the deed, if I ask for it to do. This was a day of humbling for me. Sometimes it seems I never recognize all the chances He gives me to bless people and I kicked myself for this today. *You know we all have those pity parties for ourselves!*

{For I am} confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

I am so happy I have a Savior in Jesus, on whom I depend every day I live.

So what does this have to do with the title? Do you recall my story about the dead tree and the vine? I was on this road again today and I searched diligently for it. I did not see the tree, but God gave me new insight into myself. He hid the tree and revealed traits in me that need some renovating. So I ask you, (*I already know the answer*) are there areas in your walk that need renovation?

I love that God takes the time to show me, “me” and that He loves me just the same

So, who knows, maybe today He will show you something about you that tomorrow He will hide. As He shows you, allow the gentle hand of God to renovate you. It is only painful if we allow this flaw to go unchecked.

When God Asks, “What Do You Want?”



This was a most unusual week for me. I wrote and prayed a great deal. Then God asked me the \$64,000 dollar question.

What do YOU want? At first, all I could think to do was ask that He do things for people I know and for others in need. Well, a few days pass and He asked once again, “What do YOU want?” I once again asked for others in need and He stopped me, saying, “No! What do YOU want for YOU?”

I was floored! I thought and thought, and could not come up with good answer. In fact, I even asked people to pray for me about this.

My question for you is this. If someone with unlimited resources came to you and asked what YOU wanted, what would you ask for?

This morning I was thinking on the question He had placed before me. In fact, I was afraid that He would ask again and I would not be prepared to give an answer.

I thought about it for a few more moments and I gave the best answer I had to give. I said, “Father, give me the ability to be more faithfully obedient to You that You may be glorified all the more”.

I am not sure this is was the answer He sought of me, but it seemed as the earth shifted on its axis and an overwhelming peace came upon me.

Well, I m not sure what answer will be right for you, but if He ever asks, be prepared to give an answer, for He will press you.

All I can say is that it is incredible that He would ask and in time, I will find out the outcome of my request.

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what {you wish} me to give you."

Most of the time we are doing all the asking, but I hope that when He asks, you will be listening. May we all seek the perfect will of God in our lives, to bring honor and glory to Him. When we come, we have nothing to offer but thanks for the grace given us.

Father, thank You for your patience with me as I struggled this week with Your question. I thought I was doing best when I said I needed nothing, for You have given me all I could ever need or want. Thank You for allowing me to see what You asked was not about me at all, but all about You. May we all seek to serve You with all our might, love, and actions. Amen

God's Mercy



This is a true story that happened last fall. We, my wife and I, were coming in from Tennessee going to South Carolina to make a delivery. It had been raining off and on and we kept hearing storm alerts on the radio.

While I was driving, I had asked God to see a rainbow. It had not happened yet, but I was on the lookout. We kept hearing alerts on the radio about severe weather and tornado watches, but had ignored them.

When we reached our destination, sirens began going off and the radio was announcing a tornado in our location. While my wife watched from the truck, I headed for the guard shack to check in my load.

A female guard was badly frightened as we watched a funnel cloud form literally over our heads. Trying to calm her, I said, "Don't be scared! God is with me and wasn't going to let anything happen to us because I'm here." She replied, "What if it's your time to go?" Being the complete nut I am, I got excited and said, "Cool! Then I get to go like Elijah!" She was not amused. Seconds later, I watched the funnel cloud disappear and a full rainbow appear in its place!

After delivering my load, I stopped and showed the rainbow to the guard. I assured her God had remained in total control throughout the whole ordeal.

I have seen her several times since and although she thinks I am more than a little silly... and probably more than a little strange, I know what an amazing miracle I saw the Lord perform that day!

So you see God wants us to live by faith. He will keep us safe in all circumstances. After all, none of us is going to be with Him until He chooses.

Life lesson



Forgive me for using word pictures to get my point across, but it seems to help me explain things and some see the point I am trying to make more easily.

The imp (satan) has no power over a believer. He can prod, and pick at you, but only you give him power. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, there is no room for anything else - God takes up all the room.

Imagine, no better yet, look around at your surroundings, and see it being God. God encloses you and there is nowhere that God is not. Now find something small and imagine that is the imp. You see even the imp has to operate in the confines of God, for he cannot go where God is not.

Look at Job...

So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

The imp had to get permission to subject Job to those trials. The next time you feel troubled, do as James instructed,

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. For God already knows the outcome.

I know what you are thinking, easier said than done. Agreed, but growing is always a hard!

I would like to see (*in my perfect world*), His children go to church and after 6 months are ready to move out and start a

group on their own. We are light and salt. Light scatters darkness and salt cures, preserves and adds flavor.

Trust



Do we actually trust God in all? The reason I ask is that I have noticed Christians who hold on to past hurts and troubles. We should lay it all down at His feet. Let go, so that He can fix the brokenness in you.

Another word picture....

A little boy got a new toy car and as little boys are want to do, he broke it. He ran to his father crying for him to fix his toy. The father said he would, but the little boy would not open his hand and give the car to his father. The boy continued to cry for his father to fix his toy, all the while holding it fast in his fist. Finally, his father explained that unless he opened his hand and let him have the toy, he would not be able to repair it. Finally letting the toy car go, the little boy gave the toy to his father and he repaired it.

As with us, we want a situation fixed and we run to God with it, yet we keep a hand upon it. Until we let it go completely, God cannot fix the problem. So I ask you, do you trust God to fix the things in your life, or do you keep a hand on it?

The Change



If you spend anytime on a computer you have run into a dialog box that requires an action after you download a program or changed a setting on your computer. I use this example because that is what the love of Jesus and the implantation of the Holy Spirit set out to do. It installs a new program; changes your settings. You change from the old self to a new creation.

When you are born again, the change in your life can take three distinct turns. You can just hit the okay button, the program is installed, but no real change has taken affect. You may choose the cancel button, and call the deal off. Or, you hit the *apply* button and the Holy Spirit changes you life radically.

This is a wonderful thing and I hope that you are aware of the revelation He gives you. For change to take place, you must allow the Holy Spirit to hit the apply button. It is not something we do, but it is all about what He is doing in you. We just need to accept the glorious change taking place in us, for it is wonderful to be transformed into a being in communion with God.

Just as your computer will not operate under the new program without it being applied, neither will you operate any differently if you do not allow the Holy Spirit to change you. I love the saying, “The mind can not change the heart, but the heart can change the mind”.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform (change) the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Faith



We all know about faith and what Jesus said about it:

And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes."

Just imagine if we actually believed this! I bring this up because, as you know, the mind is a powerful thing. We need to exercise our faith. As with any muscle, the more we use it, the stronger it gets. So the next time you have gloom and doom in your life, remember Jesus said,

"All things are possible to him who believes."

Believe in the goodness of God and all His promises, He will not let you down. If we say we believe in His way and His words, we should not have a rough time living by them, since the Holy Spirit doing the majority of the work. You will not skydive if you do not trust the chute will open, you do not drive if you do not think the brakes will stop the car, nor do you eat food you think is not safe. These are all things of man, so why not trust a God who never lies, makes a mistake, and is always with you.

The Holy Spirit



The Holy Spirit is the comfort and guide promised by Jesus, to empower us to be all He made us to be. It is however not our job to be another's Holy Spirit.

Ever see a friend who had fallen away from God into the world's way? Don't you just feel compelled to say you had better turn from your ways? Don't you just want to beat them with the word of God to get them to see things your way? If the Holy Spirit is not convicting them into doing so, why do we think our words will have any affect? Our precious Holy Spirit has many times convicted me when I was messing up and at times needed the hand of our Father to slap me upside the head to get my attention.

If we are His, the Spirit will be our compass in all things, so beware that your good intentions do not go astray, for the brother or sister you are trying to turn back, may in fact not be His. Take heed to what Jesus said:

"If your brother sins go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." But if he does not listen {to you,} take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Then trust the Spirit. So please be careful not to step where you should not go, for your brother will accept, but one who is not of God, these words of correction will fall to the ground.

We are however, instructed to carry one another's burdens,

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; {each one} looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

And in all, consider it out of love; Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

On another subject of witnessing, we can cross lines and offend others. I remember when Christians would try to convince me I was going to Hades because of the sin in my life. They never once told me that God loved me. I was not willing to listen to those who themselves would say one thing and act another way. It was like a Spanish-speaking person trying to reach me and I only spoke Russian.

In fact, it was not until the Holy Spirit opened my heart and after God wooed me into His presence that I began to understand. It was not a person, but God Himself who called me from darkness to the light. I hear individuals calling gay people sinners, preaching their message without love, using condemnation to get them to turn from their sin. You will never reach anyone while trying to use your bible to browbeat someone into accepting Jesus and your way of thinking.

The Bible is a two edged sword, and if it is not cutting you to the bone, for you to change, you will never convince any other that the word is real. I will end with this,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

If you have it in you to witness for Jesus, then live your life as He commanded you, for in this, they will see Him.

What is Your Faith In?



I know that seems a strange question, but I am being serious with you. How strong would your faith be if you did not have your Bible, praise and worship music or the church? Would you feel apart from God, or would your faith grow stronger?

I ask because in different parts of the world, they do not have the things we cling to. Do you put your faith in God alone, or the *things* that make you feel good? We are told that we walk by faith, not by sight. But, may I suggest that a lot of people walk by the *things* that make them feel close to God and are not actually walking with Him.

I asked a few people to put their Bibles down for a week to see how they felt afterwards. Most would not. When asked why, they just stated they *needed* it to stay on track. So I wonder is it Jesus or the book they truly trust.

I read my Bible through once a year, so I guess you could ask me the same question. I also listen to praise and worship music as well as sermons while I travel. I pray. So, sometimes I question myself; “is Jesus enough?” Do I need those other things to keep me close?

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

So are we in fact, placing these very things over Jesus? After all, other than the Bible, these are the creations of man to help us feel closer to God. The Bible, while being the living, breathing word of God to believers, can also be used to take the place of an actual relationship with Jesus. So once again, I ask; what do you

hold dear? Is it *things* that make you feel closer to God, or God himself?

Sin



Since man was driven out of the garden, sin has separated us from God. Adam and Eve went against the will of God and sin was born. Since that time, it is a constant struggle between the world and the Kingdom of God. In the OT, it was written that certain acts were considered sins. But in the NT, Jesus made it clear that the very thoughts of man could be sinful.

The world offers to make you feel better, look better, and be better. They are empty promises.

God has a plan for us that believe. It beats anything the world can offer us. We battle sin everyday. All we can do is to have faith and believe the grace He gives is enough. This is not about condemning anyone for their sin, for we are ALL sinners.

But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

We should never use this as an excuse to sin, but where there is sin, there is grace...

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

What If



What if there was no heaven or reward to come? Would you still serve God? I was speaking to God this morning and not feeling very worthy of His love, grace or gift of salvation... although I believe in the promises and His kindness.

For me, just to be able to serve God is enough. For His glory, I would gladly give up my place in heaven because of the great and wonderful things He has done in my life.

I cursed God that day He showed Himself to me. In all my anger and hate for my life, I blamed Him and still He came and said He loved me. I love Him for what He has done, not for what He will do. May all the glory and honor be to Him and His kingdom always.

The Kingdom



'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'...nor will they say, 'Look, here {it is!}' or, 'There {it is!}' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.'

For He was speaking of Himself and the power He gave the twelve as they went out. That same power dwells in us today if we are His. God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They cannot be separated, which means God is in us and where God is, His kingdom is.

We live like we are awaiting the streets of gold and all the nice things we do not have here. I believe (though we can never make this place Heaven), we can still dwell in His kingdom right here and now. We can be a great light, shattering the darkness. We can shine so brightly that we can make the world hunger for Him and the kingdom we carry within us!

The Kingdom of God dwells in us; I ask that you seek it out not only in you, but your brothers, and sisters in Christ....then we could be all that He called us to be. A final thought for you ...

"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

If you belong to His family, then you have the Spirit in you today and have God's kingdom right here today, no matter what your situation!

Victory



But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquers through Him who loved us.

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He (Jesus) who was born of God keeps him (us), and the evil one does not touch him (us again).

Why do most of the Christians I meet not only look decidedly un-victorious, they look as though the whole world has caved in on them? What has stolen the joy they lay claim to in Jesus? Jesus came to defeat death and to allow us to live an abundant life... Which doesn't mean money, big houses, and perfect health; it does however mean joy, peace and a never-ending supply of life.

We seem to be so consumed by the world's problems that we lay aside the joy of God. When you hear the word victory, what comes to mind? Is it the winner of a race or sporting event; or the war that our side has already won? This is why He came - to take our sin and to defeat death.

We are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit only pours the goodness of God into life, even when He convicts us for wandering off the path that leads to life. For the life of me, I do not understand why we should ever be filled with anything less than joy!

My wife will sometimes pick on me saying, "The rest of us mere mortals haven't been blessed with a walk that is totally supernatural!"

My walk comes from the source of all creation... totally supernatural! I believe that when we allow emotions and situations to control us, we fall from our victory. We need to be

consumed by Him; spending as much time with Him as possible. God does not want to be a distant relative. He wants to be your Father, holding you close.

Our victory should be seen by the world! Like a news broadcast showing us the victors of a long fought war where our joy is obvious. Victory is ours to take hold of. It is a given! Do you believe this? If not, how much of what God said in His word *do* you believe? *Food for thought, isn't it?*

Missions



As the day started, I just knew it was going to be a day steeped in trials. I had just left a job... without another waiting in the wings. On top of this, it turned out my debit card couldn't be used to rent a car because I had an out of state license... this was discovered AFTER they arrived to pick me up from the parking lot of the company that I had just stopped working for. Here I was in Michigan, with all the things I had had in the truck stacked beside me and no transportation home to North Carolina. *Could this day get better?*

After some thought, I took a cab to the airport. Lugging a box of food I was intending to bring home with me, I realized that I would not be allowed to take it on board the plane. I gave it to the cab driver, who said he would give it to a homeless man he knew. A blessing – my problem would actually help someone.

I arrived at the airport, bought a ticket home, and began doing some fast repacking of things I wanted to bring with me. A woman at the ticket counter was very kind and helpful; a real blessing.

Next, I had to go through security. *I had no idea that you were allowed only a certain amount of liquid!* The security guard was also kind and helpful... although he did confiscate my toothpaste, shampoo, and shaving cream. The guard joked that since I had a beard, the shaving cream would not be missed.

I went to my gate where an older gentleman told me he liked my shirt (*it was a Christian theme shirt*). Later I would find out that he was a pastor. We boarded the flight and a man sitting one row behind me started a conversation saying that his wife collected hats and wanted to know where I had gotten mine. We talked for a few minutes before the flight got under way.

I did not think much of the two conversations. We landed and I found that I had a long delay between flights. As luck would have it, Ed, the man who had asked about my hat, was also waiting for his next flight. We spoke for a few moments then decided to grab a bite to eat. In walks Frank (the one who liked my shirt), who joined us for dinner. *Airport food, isn't it great?*

Ed spoke about his life and his battle with alcohol. After Frank joined us, we spoke about Jesus and the church as it is today. As usual, whenever I get to talk about God, I am animated. Many of the patrons of the restaurant watched me, probably wondering who the nut was. After dinner was finished, Frank went to his gate. Ed and I spoke a few more minutes. I gave him my phone number and told him to call if he just wanted to talk or if he ever needed anything.

We spoke of God a few minutes, but I did not think he was receptive. He was just another man hurting and struggling with life. I also offered him one of the bibles I had. I pray that he does call; besides being a friend, I will send him a Bible.

While walking to my gate, I ran into Frank and we spent a few minutes talking of the goodness of God; how being a light and real to people was more effective than bashing someone over the head with the Bible. For in living our faith, the world sees Jesus in us.

After leaving Frank, I was still about an hour from take off. I sat and thanked God for turning what had started out as a bad day into a day full of blessings for me. I was going home with two new friends and had met others who had also been a blessing to me.

Open your mouth and speak to people, for in words are life. And who knows, maybe you will make a friend or two along the way. I will close this by saying, next time you start a trip, think about how many down and out people you pass trying to get to your destination. Missions can start right outside your door!

Salvation



Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

*Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

We are saved this way. Not by an alter call, nor a sinners prayer, for it is all about what God did and is still doing.

So many base their hopes upon something they *did* to get salvation, yet we can do nothing on our own. By your hands you cannot obtain it, Jesus did the work on the cross. We cannot hope to add to or take from the work done at the cross and when we try, we negate the work Jesus did and it becomes a vain act.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God;

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.....

...to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

There is nothing we can ever *do*, but because of His undying love for us, He draws us to Himself.

For if we hold fast to and believe the Bible, we come by hearing the word,

So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The word is none other than Jesus Himself from Whom all things are made and held together. So as you can see it is not an action you take but a choice and is all about what God does. When He comes to call, will you answer?

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.'

Another thought about salvation that I question. While I do not question that children are protected until they come to an age of understanding and can accept Christ as their savior, I do wonder at those who claim to have been saved at a very young age. How does a child of four or five understand what it is to accept Christ? Most children are just beginning to read at that age. How can they possibly understand something so profound?

'Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it.

These were the sons of Levi according to their fathers' households, {even} the heads of the fathers' {households} of those of them who were counted, in the number of names by their census, doing the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from twenty years old and upward.

Now the sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their genealogical registration by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, head by head, every male

*from twenty years old and upward, whoever {was able to} go
out to war,*

Think about it, for I believe that God knew (since He created us), that there is an age that we become accountable. Until that age, we do not have the learning or wisdom to understand what it is to accept Christ and serve Him.

So I would teach your children as instructed by God, at the rising, walking along the road and at the lying down at night, for if we train a child the way they should go....they will not depart from it and that is a promise of God's, not of man.

Is The Church To Be Political?



When Jesus walked the earth, I wonder just how many protests He organized. I cannot seem to find anything about that or His telling His followers to overthrow a government in any biblical passage. In fact, the NT tells us to respect and obey governmental authorities because God has put them in place. Yet, I see so many religious organizations trying to reform society through politics, which will never happen.

Before I go too far on this subject, let me insert a few verses...

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

So why consume yourself with the things of this world? Our way of seeking self worth should be the power of God in us. We should be about reflecting His love by feeding the poor and doing other good works. In fact, He taught us that unless we care for those in lowly places, He would not welcome us into His kingdom.

I am blessed to be in America, but I do not think this country has been specially blessed by God or is God's chosen country. We have a huge diversity of people and beliefs in this country. While Christians know that the only way to obtain salvation is through Jesus Christ, we do not have the right to force our beliefs onto others.

Corporal prayer in schools is a hot topic for Christians. No one has banned your child from bowing his/her head and saying a silent prayer to God. No one banned your child from bringing his/her bible to read during lunch or study hall. Your child is only banned from forcing his/her beliefs onto other students... don't you want the beliefs of others different than your own also banned from forcing their beliefs onto your child?

Corporal prayer would have to take into consideration, not just Christian beliefs, but all other religious beliefs as well. Would you really want your child to be forced to pray to Mohammad or Buddha as part of putting prayer back in schools? How could we justify forcing the children of other faiths to pray to a God they don't recognize?

The Ten Commandments placed in public places is another hot topic for discussion and again, for us to force upon those who are not walking in the spirit to bow down to something they don't know or understand is just plain wrong. *God said He would write these things upon the flesh of our hearts, did He miss yours?*

Our walk with God in this life makes us aliens here, so why do we try so hard to bend others to our rules and way of thinking. Sharing your faith does not mean forcing your beliefs on others. Just as we are free to believe in our God, so we must accept that not everyone in this "Christian" country are going to value and share the same beliefs.

Love



The word “love” is used over three hundred times in the Bible and is a basic tenet of the Christian faith.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

"The second is like it, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

and you shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Love is patient, love is kind {and} is not jealous; love does not brag {and} is not arrogant,

To love, as we know it, is for the most part, selfish; it is given for what we expect in return. This is not the love of God, which He instilled in us. Love is a verb. It is an action, not just a feeling, for we are instructed to love those we want to detest. If you know the Bible, you know that the love spoken of cannot be the worldly and that the greatest love is giving one's life for another, as Jesus gave His life for us. It is selfless and not selfish.

As we empty ourselves for others, God is constantly restoring that love. Imagine if you will, a stream of water flowing from a pristine spring. If you stop the flow, it becomes stagnant, but

when free and flowing, stays pure. Love is not something based upon conditions, but is always giving and unconditional.

I know you could see yourself laying your life down for your child, or significant other, but how about for a complete stranger. Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? How a Samaritan man came to the aid of a stranger when others passed him by? Jesus said this man was the “good neighbor”.

You may be humiliated or hurt when you risk giving unconditional love to someone, but what is it worth if you don't risk it all? Loving unconditionally is the only act that can reach a lost, dying world. Remember Jesus and Stephen who, as they were brutally put to death, asking forgiveness for their killers.

If you don't think you have this kind of unconditional love, I'd implore you to ask God for it. It is one of the most important fruits of the spirit. Remember, Jesus died for Hitler, just as He died for you.

Forgiveness



"For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

"But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Forgiveness seems to be one of those things we want to place conditions on. We will forgive if the other person(s) says they are sorry or change in some way to please us.

With God, forgiveness is not intangible, but rather one of His commandments. I will be the first to say that salvation does not hinge on our forgiving others, but to forgive in essence means to allow the Holy Spirit to clean and repair the hurt that holds you in to the past. Forgiveness is a supernatural work done by God. But we must be willing to allow Him to heal and repair us. We simply cannot enjoy the freedom that Christ promises if we hold on to our hurt and anger.

Only those whose trespasses have been forgiven by God can forgive others. We are to have a spirit of forgiveness."and all spiritual gifts come from God.

I was forty years old when I accepted Christ as my Savior. The night Jesus became my king, the peace that flowed into me was incredible. Knowing that even with all I had done to this point in my life, God still loved me was overwhelming. I cried and cried

and it was at that moment that I was able to let go of all that had controlled me.

All my life I had been denying God and coming against those who believed. Bitterness and anger had been my life. I had held my father in contempt for many years and had made sure I was nothing like him.

I had never understood being born again until He gave me a new birth. His forgiveness flowed through me, along with His mighty power and amazing grace. Like a wall of water, the dam burst and the floodgates opened. All the bitterness and anger left me. I was not only forgiven, I was able to forgive and made peace with my father. I was free.

*Father, by Your awesome grace, I am whole today. You chose to spare my life. Continue to allow me to be a reflection of You.
May I continue to Glorify Your Name. Amen.*

The Door



Someone asked that I add a page on the way of salvation, so this is my attempt to put what He has shown me into words.

First I must say that there is only one way to enter His kingdom, and that is through Jesus alone, for He was the sacrifice for our sin, and as He said,

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

I do not believe this can be accomplished by an act we do, for it is God alone, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

This in itself is the truth of how we come to Him - it is by being born again. For many, this is a radical and hard to grasp concept. I didn't understand it myself until it happened to me

The way we are born again is in itself a mystery, for it is not something that we do, but it is the Holy Spirit in us transforming us into a new creature ...

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

The plan of salvation is simple as long as we allow God to effect the change. I have seen many pervert the gospel and add to it the things they say we have to do to be in God's will, using rules and rituals as a way of getting to heaven.

The promise to be with Him in His kingdom starts here and now, as soon as you are born again. It is not a far away place but is in us....

"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

The kingdom is Jesus and to have Him in you, places you in Him and where He dwells there is His kingdom. It will not be seen in outward signs but rather in the inward change.....

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

This is the evidence of the truth that you are in His kingdom, not in a prayer, or alter call, as I see it, but rather in Him alone.

Finally, and this really brings it home, that it is not by anything we do, but it is what He does, for by His grace we are saved,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God;

Peace



Peace is a state of being that allows you to remain calm no matter the circumstances. Our peace comes from the Holy Spirit; knowing that we have a connection with God and that He is always in control. Knowing that in the end, you are the victor in Christ.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

It is one of the seven signs that you have the fruit of the Spirit.

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

No matter what this world tosses at you, whatever could go wrong in your life you can keep hold of this peace. All you have to do is tap into the power of God and know He remains, even when all around you falters.

Psalm 139:1- 24:

O LORD, You have searched me and known {me.}

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

*{Such} knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is {too} high, I
cannot attain to it.*

*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from
Your presence?*

*If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in
Sheol, behold, You are there.*

*If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part
of the sea,*

*Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will
lay hold of me.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light
around me will be night,"*

*Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright
as the day. Darkness and light are alike {to You.}*

*For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's
womb.*

*I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very
well.*

*My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in
secret, {And} skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;*

*Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your
book were all written The days that were ordained {for me,}
When as yet there was not one of them.*

*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast
is the sum of them!*

*If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When
I awake, I am still with You.*

Remember Job...

*So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only
spare his life."*

As you can see, even the imp needs permission to do anything to you. I know that we all are angered or depressed by circumstances, but isn't it comforting to know God is there? God uses the things that happen in our lives to glorify, to grow, and to correct us. He always has our best interests in mind.

So stand firm on the fact that the peace, which comes from God, is not dependant on the circumstances around you, but on the One in you. Paul said it best,

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit



Paul was speaking to a young and emerging church when he, along with Peter, James, John, and Jude wrote the Epistles. They carried the gospel of a crucified, risen Jesus giving instruction to those seeking God. John wrote that we would have no need for a teacher, for the Spirit would teach us. God said He would write His law on the flesh of our hearts. If this is true, why is it so hard to grasp the truth? Rich Mullins did a song called “*Hard to Get*”. The last verse says...

*I can't see how You're leading me unless
You've led me here
Where I'm lost enough to let myself be led
And so You've been here all along I guess
It's just Your ways and You are just plain hard to get.*

It seems he was having a trust or faith issue such as we all go through from time to time. Trusting a loving, caring God and seeking the will of Jesus is sometimes hard to “get”. Having faith, which in itself is a gift given, will allow you to always walk in freedom and build the life He wants for you. When we are His, He will lead and guide your every step.

Unity of the Body



***I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity,
so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them,
even as You have loved Me.***

This line is from a prayer of Jesus in the gospel of John where he asks His Father to protect the disciples and keep them unified by their love for each other and for Him after He is gone. We know that the Father never denied Jesus anything he asked.

The only thing one can assume by our lack of unity now is our will supersedes His prayer for us. Psalm 133 is another example of this unity and the blessing it carries.

***Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell
together in unity!***

***It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the
beard, {Even} Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of
his robes.***

***It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains
of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing--life
forever.***

So imagine if you would, how different life could be for believers if we would allow this love from God to work in us!

The bond, this unity, comes from none other than Jesus. Yet, we keep trying to find that perfect way on our own; through denominations and doctrines that sometimes separate, rather than unite.

When I try to imagine the disciples that walked with Jesus; how they went without shelter, sometimes not knowing where their

next meal was coming from; leaving everything to follow Jesus, I am amazed. What love – what faith!

Then I think about the church as it was established in Acts. How they met daily, shared their meals; meeting each need as it occurred, their love for each other - talk about being a light to the world! The love they had affected not only them, but day-by-day numbers were added to the body. Salvation was contagious! If such a group would arise today, I am sure it would be labeled a cult. It would resemble a commune of the hippie days and the established church would most certainly not understand it.

Our failure as a body comes from being complacent and enjoying worldly things to a fault. They excuse themselves by saying the things I need, not seeing, or maybe not wanting to see, that it is a desire...not a need. To live as He asked us to, to follow Him as a servant, means to lift others before self.

Father, as I seek Your will for my life, to follow after the ways You set before us, let me not lose sight of those whom You came for. Allow us to be a true reflection of You, not in word alone, but in all our actions. Place Your Holy Spirit front and center to lead us out of the complacent attitude we have taken. Engage us to do Your will, for we know that splintered we make no great light, but as a unified body we can burn bright so that Your glory can be seen. We know You always answered the prayers of Jesus. Let us obey His word and become this perfected union in love to reach the distressed. In the glory of His name, Jesus, we come and say, Amen.

The Greatest Gift



How a loving God could pursue a being such as me that denied Him and would deny His existence at every opportunity, is proof of how amazing is His love for us. I went to church as child, but it was of no value to me. I understood little of what was preached. My baptism at age six was meaningless also. I was confirmed in the Lutheran church and became a church member. All meaningless, it just was not real to me.

I recall a man I worked with at the age of 18, trying to tell me about God. I rejected him and God. He so wanted to share his knowledge of God and his salvation, that my denial brought him to tears. I had a bad relationship with my father and held him in contempt. I felt completely justified by my attitude.

It was the week of Christmas and I was struggling financially, trying to pay bills and afford Christmas for my children. Here I was at 40 years of age, having a real financial struggle and to top it off, I had received a letter from my father that had driven me nuts and filled me with rage. A rage mostly aimed at me and my perceived failure as a father in not being able to provide the type of Christmas I wanted to give my children.

In the past, I had purchased lottery tickets, winning \$500.00 twice. So, with the hope of salvaging Christmas, I purchased another. When I did not win, I became enraged. I cursed God while showering in preparation for work, blaming Him for everything that was wrong in my life. Suddenly, I saw a reptilian looking creature with a black left eye that seemed to pierce my soul. In a voice of pure evil it stated, "You're mine." At that moment, through my terror, I felt a touch on my shoulder and a peace I had never known flowed through me. A soft voice said, "You are not his yet." Crying like a baby as I was leaving for work, I asked my wife if we could go to church Christmas Eve, which we did.

After the first of the year, I bought a cheap Bible and read it in three months time. I was like a dry sponge and I soaked up His word with great anticipation and joy. When I came to this passage, I wept:

Deuteronomy 4:29-31 "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find {Him} if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them."

His grace and mercy truly is amazing! At the time I cursed Him, he could have easily let my life be taken, yet He chose to give me a new life.

My life changed dramatically! I forgave my father and all rage, all anger, subsided. I have never looked back! I am what I am today because He saved me; not for what I was, but because He loved me and had a special plan in mind for me.

I give all honor and glory to God for the person He is making me to be. I have even shared my faith with my father. To my sorrow, he remains an agnostic, but I pray for him. More importantly, he knows I have forgiven him.

When I first became a Christian, I shared my experience with everyone I knew. Some thought I was nuts, (one friend accused me of having a "poor man's breakdown". Others were moved enough to renew their faith.

Thank You Father, for You are beyond comprehension. You alone save us not only from "self", but separation from Your endless love. I give praise, honor, and glory to You for the kindness You showed me. All I have to offer is my life. may it be

*glorifying to You and may Your great love be reflected in me, in
Jesus name, Amen.*

When God Speaks



Ever hear the small quiet gnawing in your soul telling you to do something? When you read the Bible does something inside feel prompted to change? Or how about listening to a praise and worship song that brings you to tears?

That is God speaking to you through the Holy Spirit. He longs for your fellowship and will go through great lengths to get you to listen. Sometimes, when we hear His voice, we try to ignore it; it does not fall into line with what we want to do, but if we are in Him, we will eventually cave to His will.

He expresses such a great love that we cannot always grasp it. He softly called your name to be His. We do not always obey, but deep inside, we long to. Our Father is so unlike anyone we can compare to here on earth. While our love is often conditional, He has only you in mind and what is best for you.

Sometimes He just wants to settle you into a place so that He can reaffirm His love for you, but there are times when He asks something from you and we struggle because what He asks may be painful. When He speaks to you, listen. He always has our best interests in mind.

There is a song that always speaks volumes to me. The name is "Word of God Speak". It is almost a prayer asking to hear God's voice. So if you hear that small quiet voice whisper your name, stop and listen.

Be still, and know that I am God;

***"Then the LORD came and stood and called us at other times,
"Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your
servant is listening."***

Let Him speak.

When we Fall



Ever find yourself in a place where you feel as though you are disconnected from God? You did something that you know is sin and you are self-tormented to the point of feeling like God has left you?

I think we have all been in that place and it is hard to crawl back to the place of security. Sometimes it is as though it is uphill; we have lost our peace and fellowship. Let me say this is not an excuse to mess up, but it is the truth that we are all going to fail at some point in our walk. Whether it is the old self lifting its ugly head, or something that comes in our lives that may trip us up, we all fall short at certain times in our lives. Peter did when he denied Jesus three times and Moses ran from God for forty years. Elijah after being used by God in a great way ran and hid. Paul wrote about doing the things he hated, yet longed to do what was right. David was another prime example of a man who loved God. God called him a man after His heart, yet like us, he stumbled.

There are two things to let us know our fellowship is broken. The Holy Spirit convicting us is the first and the second is condemnation, which is from the imp. We need to recognize the difference. For the one makes us log to be right with God and the other tells us we can never be right with God.

Jesus was the only perfect one, a holy offering for our shortcomings and our sin. When we stumble and fall, His forgiveness flows and we can always run to Him and be cleansed.

But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

All means *all*. He was on the earth a bit over 2000 years ago and when He offered Himself, it was for the past, (before we came to Him) the present (the sin we may commit today) and the future (the sin we have yet to do). If we allow the condemnation to come at us, we are driven from the peace He so graciously gave us and we believe the prince of lies. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The conviction we feel when we mess up comes from the Holy Spirit. It tells us we can overcome and that Jesus wants us to fellowship with Him. I guess the best thing to say is just this: *Learn the difference between condemnation and conviction!* Rebuke the condemnation, for it will cripple you in your walk. I heard a song whose words ring true. It was about a man who saw monks living in a monastery. The man asked a monk one day what was different about them. The monks reply, “When we fall down, we get up and keep on walking”.

Forgiveness is a promise from God. The only condition is that we believe in His son, Jesus. We do not need to wait until we have done something that makes us feel that we are worthy; in that, we are denying the power of Jesus. Get up and keep walking. Believe in what He did, does, and will always do – forgive.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

When you fall, get up! He will be right there to once again guide you and bring you close. Stay blessed in His promises, *all of them!* Forgiveness is a promise and God cannot go against His word, EVER.

Proof of God



If your surroundings do not convince you of the existence of God, then I am not sure this will either, but please allow me to go on. When I was 15 years old, I worked at a pizza place in the evenings. Walking home from work about 1:00 am, one weekend night, I experienced my first encounter with God.

I lived about five miles from work and the walk normally took about 30 minutes. For some reason I decided to confront God. Aloud I told God, "If you are real, show Yourself to me". As I got closer to home, thoughts were racing through my mind and I was not paying too much attention to my surroundings. I approached a shortcut through a wooded area, but because it was so late, I decided stay on the lighted path of the sidewalk.

From across the street, (it was a four lane road, with a grass median), came a call from a man with long hair asking, "Do you want someone to walk with?" I was startled and afraid. I was close to the street I lived on and I replied, "I'm turning here". I began to run and looked back. There was no one there. I did not see where this man could have come from or where he could have gone so quickly.

When I was safely home, I quickly forgot the incident. In 1997, some 35 years after this had happened, I recalled the incident and realized that God had begun calling me even before that had happened!

God began to call when I was attending a confirmation class. The pastor had me stand on a table with my back to him, then asked me to fall backwards, which I did without a second thought. He asked why I had and I replied that I trusted him. After all, he was a pastor and would not hurt me or let me be hurt. He then said that it was this kind of blind faith we need to

be accepted by God. At the age of 12 or 13, I was not buying it, but, in the back of my mind, it stuck with me.

After I accept Christ as my Savior, I wonder if it was an angel or Jesus himself who answered my challenge that night more than 25 years earlier. Maybe it was the earlier experience of trusting so completely that I willingly fell into someone arms that He uses to remind me of His unfailing love.

Is this proof of God? Honestly, I just do not know, but I am convinced in my own mind that He answered when I asked Him to show Himself in a tangible way. I love the story about leaving the 99 to go after the one. That was me. Lost and stubborn until the night when His love reached through my darkness. Showing me that He had been there walking beside me all along.

The Sabbath



By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

"Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, {the} Sabbath, there will be none." "See, the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

So that by this we were given a day to rest from our work, and even to make such a day holy as set apart unto God.

So why do we have such contention about the Sabbath and what day of the week it should be observed? One group insists it be observed on Saturday and curses the group who observe the Sabbath on Sunday.

And he said unto them, that the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath.

And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

The Lord then answered him, and said, [Thou] hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or [his] ass from the stall, and lead [him] away to watering?

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

When we look at what the Sabbath was set apart for, we know it is for rest. Jesus is that perfect rest we enter into when we are changed. Paul said,

"do not let any man lord over you a Sabbath day, for some hold all days the same and some another".

In this, we can see that we yield to the Holy Spirit to lead us to that rest.

Would you tell a man providing for his family that he needed to quit his job because he worked on a certain day? I hope not, for we are told to do everything as unto God. Taking care of your family, as well as being a good employee. Why do we want to cause division over a day as if we still trying to live by the law? James wrote that if we keep the whole law, yet stumble in a small area, we are judged by the weight of the entire law.

What more can I say, but to give you His word to reflect upon and hope He will give you a heart to understand it...

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I Swore In My Wrath, They Shall Not Enter My Rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

We live under the law of liberty to love God, serve one another and to carry our brother's burden.

The Gift of Love



I wrote this after watching a show on Animal Planet about who monks raised and trained dogs. They were talking about the love a dog gives in return to its master/mistress. This is not just true with dogs, but with children as well. We all know how children are always happy to see you, or hear your voice. They are completely reliant on you for everything. This started me thinking about why we don't have this kind of love towards God our Father, for He takes care of us in the exact same manner we do with a child.

When is the last time you searched for Him to hear His word, or smiled at Him as your baby smiled at you as it awakes from a nap? What is it in us that prevent us from loving Him with all our might? It is a mystery that I think we should spend time contemplating. As a child will coo as a baby when it sees it's parents, or a toddler will run with open arms to a parent as they return from work, so we should be towards our Father who gave us the greatest gift of all. And these precious gifts we are commanded to receive as a child.

Will we try to match this kind of love towards God or will we stay on our current course of rationalization? Imagine your child ignoring you on your arrival, the hurt it would cause! We would be devastated! Our rationalization assumes that God understands that we are busy - and to a point He does. But... We are cheating not only God, but ourselves of the close, intimate relationship we should have with Him. I want to love Him as a child. How about you?

Who's Will



I was involved in a Christian forum and it got the best of me. Instead of letting God speak through me, I took my thoughts and tried to make them God's thoughts. I am not sure why we all have viewpoints that we feel need to be defended – as if our viewpoint is the only correct one, but so often, we try to force our views onto others in the name of our faith.

We will never make this rock His kingdom, nor can we change the fact that this world is the imp's domain, for it was given to him. We can however unite as Jesus prayed we would in John 17. Instead of clubbing each other over the head with our perception of what the world should be, we *could* be its light.

May He find us ready for His return, even in the midst of all the chaos that eats away at the world. As Christians, why are we so consumed by the world's way of doing things?

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love {and} peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses {and escape} from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

This is one of four places in the NT where quarrels are mentioned. For He said,

seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.

In His kingdom, we have a king in Jesus, so I lay down the point I was seeking to prove. I want my views to be from God, less I give the imp any advantage with me.

The Rock



I hope you find the time to look at all the times “rock” is mentioned in the Bible and seek the meaning behind each.

The rock Moses struck to bring fourth water was a representation of Jesus and the salvation we find in him. Will you willingly drink from it?

"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

Although the word stone is used here, it is Jesus being referred to. Those of us who come to Him will become broken, so that He may reign in us, but those who reject Him will be destroyed.

I know many times in my life I denied Him. Then I was gently broken by Him and now I am whole in Jesus.

Loss of Life



I use to be afraid to cross the lines of my own control I set up before God. I saw myself as getting close to insanity, I did not recognize *me*, and it was frightening. As I allowed myself to cross the line of self-control and give it all to Him, I no longer recognize the individual I use to be. Now it is all about His glory. My life is so abundant and filled with joy, I must give it away daily, or I feel as though I will explode. The Rock of my salvation broke me so very gently, then replaced me with a new me - Himself living in me.

As the days come and go, He is bringing more and more people into my life that need Him. God is working through me to do great things and I am blessed.

May Jesus receive all the glory, Amen

Deny Yourself



Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

What does this mean to you? I do not intend to give you your answer, but rather to share what God has spoken to me. This morning as I was waking up, I do as I always do, speak with God. Well this morning it was as though I was being flayed by His words, "Deny yourself".

I am constantly seeking a closer walk with Him, so that He is all that is left of me. He took me here...

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

He told me it would cost my entire being. I had thought I was doing a good job of serving Him. I write, I share my faith with those I meet and I minister to the poor. I hand out Bibles and have visited the sick and elderly. All this time thought it was enough. Then this came to mind...

"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done {only} that which we ought to have done.' "

So you see, although we do the things He asks of us, is this enough? The cost of walking closer to God is all of you. He receives the glory and you remain in the shadows doing the things that He purposes for you to do.

In Closing



God chose a perfect time to give us the perfect sacrifice for our sins, Jesus. My prayer for all who have read this book is to seek Jesus in all you do. Do not rely on my thoughts, interpretations or opinions... take the time to use God's word. See for yourself; draw your own conclusions. I pray that you come to a place where your walk with our Lord is as close and personal with Him as God meant it to be.

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About the Author



The author chose to use the pseudonym Balaam's Donkey, who saved the life of mad prophet, Balaam, for several reasons, not the least of which is that our Savior used a donkey to enter Jerusalem before the crucifixion. In both instances, a lowly beast of burden was used for noble purposes in service to God, which is what the author aspires to be... a servant of God

used for His good purposes.

