

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



AGEING - PRIORITIES

**THE LORD CHALLENGES US TO THINK ABOUT OUR
ETERNAL DESTINY – NOT MAKE BUCKET LISTS**

by

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[BOOK 107B]

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WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching Law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord".

HOW CAN I BE SAVED?**Salvation is available for all members of the human race.**

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise, nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

How do I become a Christian?

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

The results of Salvation

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:

My sins are taken away (John 1:29),

I possess eternal life now (1 John 5:11,12),

I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),

The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (1 Corinthians 6:19),

And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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Aging in our Modern World - Quotes To Reflect Upon

John 14:1-6 *"1. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
4. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.
5. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?
6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

Paul urges the churches to "set their hearts" on heavenly certainties above any temporary and decaying rewards of space-time. This advice especially applies to the believers as they age and become aware that time and its associated opportunities to serve are starting to run out and we are nearing the end of the earthly race. As we draw closer to the end we are challenged to accelerate not wind down focus.

Colossians 3:1-4 *"1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.
2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."*

Philippians 1:21-25 *"21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
22. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.
23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:
24. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.
25. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;"*

We are still at every point on our pilgrim journey through space-time "in the arena" of service and we are here to witness, worship and work, and the godly dead cheer us on from the stands. Let us ensure we give those who have gone before us something to cheer us on about, especially as we get older.

Hebrews 11:9-16 *"9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:
10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
11. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.
12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.
13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.
16. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."*

Hebrews 12:1-2 *"1. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Are we preoccupied by the things of this world that do not last? The best spiritual things we see here through the Holy Scriptures are at best a "glimpse" of the eternal reality we will be part of after this life transitions into eternity. Drawing near the transition point (death) should focus our minds forward.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 “9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 “55. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
56.. The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 7:9-10 “9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

Hebrews 12:22 “But you have come to Mt Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels...”

Revelation 5:11-12 “11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Matthew 6:19-21 “19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

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4. Solomon does not hide the “awful truths” of Aging – Ecclesiastes 12.
5. St Paul is very direct – Buy Up the Time – Ephesians 5:14-21, 2 Corinthians 5.
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1. Our Lord's Challenge To Us All – distractedly letting the days fly by on this temporary planet – its not the way to end the race.

John 3:16-36. *"16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
18. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.
19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.
20. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.
21. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.
22. After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.
23. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.
24. For John was not yet cast into prison.
25. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.
26. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.
27. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.
28. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.
29. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.
30. He must increase, but I must decrease.
31. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.
32. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.
33. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.
34. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.
35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.
36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

Socrates challenged the Greek World of his day with the philosophical statement – “we shall all die, so how then should we live?” The Christian challenge is actually quite different. The Bible teaches and proclaims the challenge to all human beings – “you will live forever, for life given by God is not ever extinguished, so what is it to be for you? Who will you spend eternity with; God or the demonic?” Who do you desire to be with forever? Are you lovers of God or are you just too busy with the daily details of this short life for the things of God?

Relationships we value is at the core of this question. Do we choose a loving and obedient relationship with our Creator and Saviour, or do we get distracted, deceived, or are we just too lazy to care about God until it is too late, and we drop unprepared into an eternity without any more hope? It is a serious subject of reflection that many avoid, but ask yourself, how many people saw or heard Jesus in his ministry and how many actually took him seriously enough to follow him or his teaching? Few actually followed the Lord Jesus, even from amongst those

personally healed by Him! Tens of thousands were healed yet only 120 people are there in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. **Acts 1:15**.

The twenty first century has been called an “age of anxiety”, but the right phrase is probably “an age of deception/distraction”, but actually how different is this to the Ages past? We certainly have more digital distractions today, but in all ages and in all places there are things that can distract us from eternal realities until it’s just too late. The falsehoods and time-wasting activities that abound today create frustration and anxiety, because they distract and deceive people away from the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ and there is peace of mind and stability only in a living relationship with Him. Things that do not matter eternally are always going to frustrate in the end, but by then a life may be over.

Jesus was uncompromising about this truth of the eternal nature of the choices we make about our salvation. We are here on the planet for a very limited time, and we must decide during this short period where we want to spend eternity, and whose company we desire forever. You either take this issue seriously, study it, believe God and His Word and apply it into the very fabric of your daily life or you walk away, like the Rich Young Ruler. **Matthew 19:16-30**.

Read this account of the interaction between them and note that the Lord didn’t chase after that rich and thoroughly wealth-distracted young man with any “special offer”; he was challenged to seriously think about the options he had, then “trust and obey” or walk away into an eternity without hope, real life and peace of any sort! Jesus wasn’t into slick marketing, just blunt truth telling. As we get older the truth about our mortality is harder to ignore, and yet ignore it the majority keeps doing.... The rich young ruler was the picture of success and yet he had no peace, but when the challenge came, he preferred his money, fame and power to a living relationship with Jesus that may have compromised those earthly things.

Luke 12:51. *“Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division”.*

Jesus was very direct and challenging, and we have often failed our unsaved friends by being too polite at times. Peace of mind only comes when you are anchored deep within your soul in the light of the reality of death, and the truth of eternal life in Christ Jesus alone. That means you must be anchored in spiritual certainties that are stronger than the aches and pains of older age as well as death itself, and that is only the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He alone has defeated sin and death. Only an eternally significant relationship helps us face death, but well before that, only an eternal life perspective helps us face aging, and limitations of our physical abilities, for we see something more, beyond the physical.

Acts 4:12. *“12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

John 14:23-30. *“23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

24. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

25. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

28. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

29. *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

30. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."*

Now pause and reflect on this passage again and remember that it follows directly after his words on the certainty of heaven earlier recorded in John Chapter 14. Reflect also that it was the other Judas, (not Iscariot) who asked the question that opens up the reply Jesus gives above. Judas was not that different to the rich young ruler; he was still stuck in his Jewish wealth=spiritual mindset.

Judas is trying to get his head around what Jesus is about to do, and the theology of wealth and power distracts people so they cannot understand spiritual priorities. Like most of us Judas and the others wanted truth, but if possible, with wealth and power and yet it was empty of significance as all temporary pleasure is. It is the desire of the heart of each person that is being examined by God in the choices we make about Jesus and His legitimate demands on our time. Now reflect again, "Is it our time?" Whose time do we have on this planet after we meet the Lord?

1 Peter 1:18-19, 23-25. *"18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;*

19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Who owns us? We are the Lord's, and our times are in His Hands. Do we have Paul's mental attitude that we are "bond slaves of Christ", for that is how he always introduces himself? He and Peter saw their lives as "sold out" to and for Jesus, but we have all too often slipped into the thinking of the world and see all the conflicting demands on our time and take the insignificant too seriously. We say it glibly – "He is my Lord", but that means **HE owns you** and you do only what He allows or orders. Have we gone that far yet, for Peter and Paul had and maybe that's the demand upon us each and every day that we desperately need to hear, especially as older age starts to bite us....

Luke 16:19-31. *" 19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:*

20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27. *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:*
28. *For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*
29. *Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*
30. *And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*
31. *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

The Lord's parable here was discussed in our earlier book on Heaven in terms of eternal life, but let's look at the same parable and ask ourselves about "life-style" choices, for the poor beggar Lazarus had finally run out of options, but had been cast/laid down at the gate of a rich family, who did feed him their scraps, but his cancer/disease was too far advanced even for the best food scraps to help him and he died. The rich man (nameless like all the lost in hell) had enjoyed a great lifestyle to the end of his life, careless of his choices other than enjoying himself until he died and dropped into judgment. He knew he deserved to be where he found himself but was shocked at the suddenness of his death, the shock of his arrival in Hell, and the shocking permanence of it. It wasn't what his false theology led him to believe was his destiny.

The rich (now very dead and poor) man had been too busy to ever really question end of life issues and where to afterwards. Lazarus didn't have a "great old age", but it would appear neither did the rich man; both die young (not "full of years" – 70 plus). Who is comforted and who is relaxed eternally? It's the man who ended his life without the "creature comforts" of a happy retirement. Heaven and Hell and deep peace of mind and heart are realities that must be held in the background when we think or daydream with all the pictures we paint of older age problems and "retirement living".

- John 14:1-21** *"1. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*
- 2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*
- 3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*
- 4. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*
- 5. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*
- 6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
- 7. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*
- 8. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*
- 9. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*
- 10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*
- 11. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*
- 12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*
- 13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*
- 14. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*
- 15. If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

16. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*
17. *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*
18. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*
19. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*
20. *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*
21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."*

What do we define as our "treasures"? What matters to us as we get older? Is it our library, our car collection, garden, beach house, fishing, our antiques, or stamp collection? What do we surround ourselves with as we age and what are the activities that demand our attention? What are our life priorities and how do they change through the years? Where does our money and time go as the decades advance? Jesus challenges us at all times in our life to think about where our "assets" go, and that means our time, our energy and the available money we have access to at that moment. What do we spend our precious moments on? "Assets" are of no value to us if we cannot cash them up and use them for God's glory and our own eternal rewards.

- Matthew 6:19-24.** *"19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*
- 20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*
- 21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*
- 22. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*
- 23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*
- 24. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."*

- Matthew 22:23-33.** *"23. The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,*
- 24. Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.*
- 25. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:*
- 26. Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.*
- 27. And last of all the woman died also.*
- 28. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.*
- 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*
- 30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*
- 31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,*
- 32. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*
- 33. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine."*

Note that powerful phrase - "God is not God of the dead but of the living". **All** who have ever lived remain "alive" in eternity, but the nameless lost are in hell awaiting the last judgement at the end of space-time. **Revelation 20:10-15**. In light of our end in heaven or hell, what does

matter amongst the things that we have done or achieved? God is the God of the ever-living and while we are alive and can change the eternal outcome, what are we doing about it now?

The issue is indeed a “great divide” for it separates people and angels into two distinct groups with no overlap between the two forever. The “vast gulf” between the saved and the lost before the Last Judgment is even more reflected in the “Lake of Fire” – the imploded black-hole of the detritus of the space-time universe that exists forever in the new heavens and earth. **Revelation 20:14, 21:8, 27**. In the “Lake of Fire” are trapped all fallen angels and God ignoring and God hating humans, and they are there forever. Their choices are made by the end of time and locked in forever.

As we age we see time ticking by and it is so obvious – we ought to think about where we are heading yet so many keep ignoring the reality until the end catches them unprepared for it. Many are shocked to die – they thought they had longer. Why do they deceive themselves so badly into thinking they have control over their life when none of us do. The question is – have you relaxed into the arms of the Lord Jesus and rested securely in the power of His Plan for your life and death, or are you deluded enough to think you control your own destiny?

Moses said it three millennia ago. **Deuteronomy 30:19**. *“I call heaven and earth today as witnesses against you. I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life that both you and your descendants may live...”*

This remains the biggest issue for our brief pilgrim journey through this temporary universe of space-time. that’s the first point to come to terms with – that this entire universe of space-time began with the “Big Bang” and ends with the “Big Black Hole”. Peter saw this in AD 63, and recorded his vision of the nuclear implosion of the present universe in **2 Peter 3:10-14**, and urges his readers to heed the end of the universe and its eternal replacement and pay attention to God’s demands on their life now. Does modern Physics have this effect on us today? It ought to, because it’s just caught up to Peter’s vision!

Will we choose activities each day that reflect an interest in eternal life, or will we be distracted and chase after things that are for this very short life only? We look about and we feel the apparent permanence of everything we see and touch, yet it is not permanent at all, and neither is our life here. How easily we are distracted and deceived about what really matters each day here. Let us each embrace the urgency of the gospel message and proclaim the truth about this world and the One who stepped into it, coming from eternity into space-time, to bring the only “good news” of permanent value there is here.

All of the enemy’s energy and guile is focused on keeping human beings distracted by things that don’t matter until they drop off this temporary planet into eternal judgment. We are constantly told on Television programs to “live the dream”, and what they mean is, be wealthy, relaxed, with lots of leisure activities to partake of and then cruise into food, drink and more holiday activities. Life has become a long holiday cruise to many and they speak of it as if it will last, but it won’t! It’s a temporary planet and God’s got something better for us – and as we get older that reality needs to be more “front of house” in our decision making.

The very phrase, “bucket list”, reminds even the hardened atheist that they will one day soon “kick the bucket” (die) and yet they don’t ask, “and then what?” When people speak of “their dreams” of what life means we need to be discerning and ruthless in our logic and ask the question – is this a pleasant dream that will last the distance and still bring joy to our heart in eternity, or is it a short-term feeling that lasts for a moment only?

Jesus’ challenge is for us all to face the reality of His offer of the fulness of joy of eternal life with his reminder that this offer is “for a limited time only”. His path is clearly announced as a “narrow path” (Matthew 7:13-23) – a walk with him along a constricted mountain path that may

be difficult at times but will bring lasting satisfaction and meaningful activity that will be rewarded eternally. What then do we seek, and as the days darken and energy flags with older years, what are our determined priorities for spending our limited time doing? James is very blunt about the consequences of our choices.

James 5:1-6 *“1. Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.*

2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

3. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

4. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

6. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.”

Wealth that has been achieved by devious means or simply to “have what others don’t have” gives no satisfaction at all. There is no joy in ownership of anything that doesn’t last long, for it soon goes and must be replaced by another thing. Any “thing” gets its meaning and significance from what it is used for and the results of that. We need all the things of this life to live and work, and even to witness and worship some “things” are required, but James challenges us to think about what we have acquired and how we have acquired it.

Was it gained legitimately, and do we hold all we have “loosely”, always ready to use it for God’s glory or other’s blessing? Was/is there godly purpose in the acquiring and the using of all we have? To correctly be related to the temporary “things” in this temporary space-time universe we need to be rightly related to the things and the universe itself, and Jesus and James’ point is that it is only in relationship with the Lord that we achieve that. As we get older, what do we cling to more tightly by way of possessions? What things actually “possess” us, and what do we hold to use and be a blessing? What activities give us our true meaning for still being on the planet, and what things are simply distractions that help us hide from the upcoming reality of our departure from this world?

1 Timothy 6:17-19 *“17. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*

18. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Don’t be distracted or pre-occupied by physical wealth, for all wealth is “uncertain”, here today and wiped away tomorrow by a catastrophe we don’t see coming. Focus on what is lasting and dependable and that is God’s presence, the Lord’s guidance, and the task He wants us to fulfil; and so be sure He will provide all we need to do that assigned task. Things of themselves are uncertain, but when they are part of the eternal plan of God for our life they become “certain”, in the sense that they are ours, gifts from God to use to complete the plan.

We relax into the Eternal Plan of God for our life and use all we have received for God’s glory – with open hands, ready to receive more or pass on to others what we have. As we age, we are meant to relax more and more, not be worried by “retirement” costs, for our focus is on our walk and work for/with the Lord and all things settle around that path. Our “foundation” for happy relaxation in our life as we age depends upon our focus on eternity as an athlete focuses on the finishing tape of the running race. All we have is to serve and all we do is to

bring glory to the Lord forever and so win eternal crowns/rewards – and it is these “things” that are our focus, not the temporary things of space-time that decay away.

Hebrews 11:10-14. *“10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

11. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.”

Hebrews 13:14. *“13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

Abrahamic Faith is our challenge as we age, just as Abraham expanded his faith as he aged. He looked beyond the things around him, seeing past the concepts of ownership and being content to live in a tent and not own any land other than a burial cave for his and his family’s dead. He saw the promises of God as more real than the physical things the pagans around him valued. He did “look for a city”, a place to have a permanent dwelling in, but he saw it as heavenly not on earth and he didn’t miss out on anything. Neither will we if we follow Abraham. What does that mean in our daily life as we get older?

Are the promises of God’s Word more real than the physical details of life that surround us? Do we see our eternal relationships as more real than those of time? Do we value eternal rewards/crowns ahead of cars and boats and art works? Abraham saw all he was surrounded by as simply things to use to achieve God’s purposes on his pilgrim journey. Let’s examine two men below who challenge us to think about our own “pilgrimage journey”. Samuel, who didn’t have a prosperous retirement at all, and Jacob (old Israel) who only really got with the plan in his last years in Egypt after being reunited with Joseph. Genesis 47:9.

Notes

2. The Garden of Eden is lost until the Lord Returns – Don't seek for it here and now.

(Two examples of difficult older age – Samuel and Jacob/Israel.)

Genesis 3:17-19 *“17. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

18. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Adam was tasked to take responsibility/accountability for the “health and safety” of Eve and their life generally, and he failed to guide and encourage/correct her, but rather bowed to the false advice she had received from the serpent. He did not take charge in spirit and truth and correct the falsehoods Eve had accepted and take her back to the Lord to seek a solution. Eve was deceived but Adam deliberately sinned – rather than take Eve to the Lord and deal with the deception he went along with it and felt he could hide from the truth, and that meant hiding from God. As we get older it is easy to hide from unpleasant facts, but it's a dumb strategy – “Operation Fig Leaves” always leaves us embarrassed when the truth emerges.

Their enjoyment of Eden was over at that point of active disobedience to God's clear instructions, and they find themselves wearing fig leaves hiding from God. It's a good picture of how pathetic we can get when we refuse to face the truth about our choices and their consequences. They had never had to face until that point the issues of aging, but from God's judgment of them they start to age and grow old. It will be 900+ years until they die but the process has begun with all the debilitating things that aging brings into humanity beginning here. Its now thorns, weeds and sweat – life begins from that point in time outside the Garden to be a battle and it remains one for us all and it gets harder as our strength, mental focus, and energy depletes with aging. Have we accepted this unpleasant truth?

There is no return to the Garden of Eden, no “Fountain of Youth”, no place that is truly “heaven on earth” even though many seek that place, and some believe they have it. Everywhere we go on this temporary planet we face aging, dying and decay because of our ancestor's sin; any escape from this reality is very fleeting. As we age, we need the honesty to see the truth as Abraham did and focus on eternity in order to overcome the tendency to hide from the truth that we inherited from Adam and Eve.

Let us look at two men who are certainly not the “poster-boys” for the prosperity gospel retirement plan! Firstly, let us look at Samuel and walk through his life and death and reflect on the pilgrim journey he was asked to walk with the Lord. It is not the “happy ending” for Samuel that many would expect after a life time of service, and that is why his pilgrim path is a good one to reflect upon. Turn in your bibles to 1 Samuel Chapter 7:15. The author notes that Samuel “judged Israel all the days of his life”. It is a strong statement that reminds us there is no “retirement” from the Lord's call upon our life, but in Samuel's life we see him trying to ease up and pull back, and we see Saul stopping him move about and minister freely towards the end of his life, but he still ministers as he is able.

Poor Samuel is under effective house arrest for the last years of his life, for Saul feared Samuel would support David's rebellion against his authority, and rather than surrender to God's will, the paranoid old king fought to keep everybody under his own control, and it leads

to his death with his sons on Mount Gilboa. Refusal to face God's plan for our life and the lives of others will always lead to ugly outcomes and many good men died when Saul failed to heed the old prophet and acknowledge David as the replacement king.

In 1 Samuel Chapter 8 Samuel appoints his sons as judges, to share the burden with their father but like Eli he has no luck with his sons and their corruption leads the people to call for a king to "sort things out". Samuel is devastated but hears the Lord's words and realises that its not about him, it's about the rejection of theocracy – the people didn't want rulership by a man of God or his inferior sons, they wanted a man of war and all that went with it. Samuel opposes Saul because he opposes God's direct orders again and again and in the end he is side-lined by the king and not consulted but Samuel loses nothing by his obedience.

Samuel anoints David and encourages him as he can. 1 Samuel Chapter 16. Having attempted to stand aside and "retire" and realising he cannot, Samuel throws himself back into prophetic and priestly judge life, and he is obedient when called to minister support by the Lord. His readiness to step out of semi-retirement and stand with David against the king shows the courage that we are all called to. When David flees from Saul, chapter 19:18, he heads for Ramah where Samuel lives. After this meeting Saul ensures Samuel isn't able to leave town and the next we hear of him is in chapter 25:1, "and Samuel died".

I have reflected upon the life of Samuel a great deal in light of aging myself and looking at my expanding of ministry in my seventies rather than "cutting back". I feel for the old prophet for he wanted to be active, and after trying to get his sons active, he recognized his call was life-long and stepped up whenever God called him to act. In his "house arrest retirement" time until his death he must have been a servant of all who came to consult with him (1 Samuel 7:15 refers) and until his death he is a beacon of truth even though unable to walk about the land due to Saul's fear he would join David. He doesn't end his ministry life with free travel to all the land, nor with a "big congregation", or fame and honours from the king; he is despised by many as a traitor but blessed by God.

Samuel mentors that servant heart that may try to step aside for the next generation, but quickly steps back up and takes the lead when it's clear there are few voices raised for truth. He is like John, who still serves as Bishop of Ephesus until his death in his nineties in the late 90s of the first century. John's great written works were only put on papyrus in his nineties, Revelation the first through the ordeal at Patmos, then the Gospel of John after his return to Ephesus, and the First Letter to accompany the Gospel. Thank God he didn't "retire" and play bowls! So many pastors stop preaching, teaching, writing or counselling and just play games to fill their last days. Samuel and John remind us, even if in jail, exile or house arrest keep looking up and asking, "Lord is there anything left you wish me to do before I come home?"

Our next man, Jacob, renamed Israel in his older age, is another example of a man who comes "on line" for blessing later generations only in his last years and Jacob is indeed a "late bloomer", as he is over 130 years of age when he gives his two prophetic words regarding the future of the twelve tribes. Genesis 48-49. Jacob has almost ruined his life and his sons by his favouritism and slack care for his family for decades. Read the "Lives" Commentaries on these chapters of Genesis and be amazed at God's grace towards this man, for Jacob fails again and again, and yet he is loved to the end – just as we are also.

He has been self centred and inactive at times when he needed to take charge, and the murders at Shechem are a blight on his memory, but he repents and is restored and in the last years he delivers a prophetic word that is still significant today. We are reminded by each of these men that as we age, we are to look up for instruction and at no point do we stop asking the Lord for direction to minister. If we are alive there is a task to be done – lets be ready to be "under orders" and do God's will to the end of our days. We are not judged by God in accordance with results, for that is other's choices, but in accordance with our obedience.

3. The Psalmist speaks to us as the days slip by faster and faster

Psalm 90:9-12. *“9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.*

10. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

We find ourselves reflecting as we age on the speed of the “flying” passage of time and its acceleration as we enter older years – we are indeed a “tale that is told” and soon over. We can feel the dangers of divine discipline and the malice of the enemy also in a heightened way as we get older. When young, fit and strong we can fool ourselves into thinking we can control our destiny. We cannot control much at all, but our early human strength and knowledge deceives us into believing we are more powerful than we are.

There is no such danger for most as we age, for sudden pains and aches grab our joints and vitals and we know we have an appointment with our Maker soon. We don't need a new degree as we age unless for fun, for of adding knowledge there is no end, but we desperately need wisdom to live well and with an eye on eternal values to make the wise choices each and every day. The majority, even noting the above, still persist in self-deception until they die. It is baffling to all pastors who work with the elderly that so many continue ignoring the reality of their coming death and die surprised by the event and totally unready for eternity.

Psalm 39:4-10. *“4. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.*

5. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

6. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

8. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.”

The Psalmist asks for clarity of mind over his aging and his coming death, for he knows just how devious our mind can be in fooling us into thinking we are wiser, stronger and more able than we are. It's not being “negative”, its being real, but the satanic malice and devious marketing strategies of worldliness tries to hide the truth from all who can be fooled. Even at our best we are “vanity”, sheer puffery and pretence. All we achieve of value is achieved within God's Plan, in Holy Spirit power and with the Lord opening the doors for blessing and opportunity. Without God's plan and power all our strategies come to nothing and without eternal values guiding our decision making all our achievements are of no significance at all.

How many of our friends seek to be the “richest person in the cemetery” and do not see the truth that all we make here is left behind when we leave this world. All we gather is scattered on our death, so aging well is making decisions that matter eternally and acting with all the strength we have on our “good intentions”. Aging well is using the moments of each day to be useful within the Lord's Plan for our life. We are always a breath away from death and the Lord may end our lives under the “Sin Unto Death” if we seriously waste our allotted time here.

Psalm 27:3-11. *“3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.*
5. *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.*
6. *And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.*
7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.*
8. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.*
9. *Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*
10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*
11. *Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.”*

The smartest way to start each day as we age is to worship and draw close to the Lord's presence. We will not be forsaken by the Lord of our salvation, for He has saved us for a purpose and that purpose is to find its expression in our last years. As we saw with Jacob and Samuel and even with John, the last years may be the most productive and focused for we have a lifetime to draw upon in the Holy Spirit's power. We begin "buying up the time" by a worshipful start to each day. "Buying up the time" we have means we look up to the Lord before we check our diary for social engagements.

Three distinct phases of human history regarding aging are seen in the scriptural records. Phase one takes us from the Garden to the Flood, and the age expectancy of the people in this period is significantly greater than our own, towards 900+ years for some. Scientifically we are just starting to understand how this may have been the case, with the existence of the Vapour Canopy over the entire earth at this period restricting the cosmic rays that cause aging.

The second period is that of the Patriarchs where ages were regularly around the 120 years mark that God set just before the flood in response to mankind's sinful choices. **Genesis 6:3**. From that time onwards the age expectation has been steadily lowering and is lowered in the third phase of human history that we find ourselves in, to just seventy years. **Psalms 90:10**. Even though the age expectancy is now set at 70 there are a number of people in each generation that do reach the previous 120 and some who get above it.

Note the psalmist's words however, for even though we may get 80 or 90 years it is with pain and debility and it rushes by as we draw near the end. I am reminded of Billy Graham's words here, when asked, "what has life taught you Dr Graham?" He answered, "Its brevity". As we get older the days and years appear to speed by even faster and we find ourselves saying the things our elders once said. "Where has the time gone?" Looking back fifty years we say, "It seems like yesterday" – and it does, because it was but yesterday in the passage of space-time. As the years gallop by as we age, let us daily draw near the truths that do not change.

As we reflect on these things as the years tick by certain Psalms may become "favourite" ones, and while some frown on such things, I am personally seriously blessed by a number of Psalms, and they have been anchors of my soul through the dark days of pressure from 2004 – 2024 for me. I discuss them below. For while I make it my habit to read the entire book of Psalms monthly through my Anglican "Book of Common Prayer" 1662, these specific Psalms discussed below stabilize my mind when it buckles under the anxiety based pressures.

- Psalm 37:3-7, 23-28.** *"3. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*
4. *Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*
 5. *Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*
 6. *And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

7. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*
23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*
24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*
25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*
26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*
27. *Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.*
28. *For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off."*

Look at the events we have lived through since the 1970s with the "oil price shocks", financial crises, terrorism, wars, volcanoes, tsunamis, AI, Climate catastrophes, droughts, famines, pandemics.... What is our response to be as we age and face more threat messages coming into our minds and less robust health and strength to cope with them? Cast yourself firmly and totally upon the security that the Lord alone can provide for you; do not ever depend upon other people or the power they claim to have. All the power of men is as the grass, and the slightest changes in world finance destroy all security. We have seen the truth of all these verses in recent years during the "world financial crisis" (2007-2012) and yet so many believers spend more time in the financial pages than they do in the Bible! Jesus words build upon the revelation he gave earlier to Moses and to David.

Matthew 6:28-34

- "28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:*
29. *And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*
30. *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*
31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*
32. *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*
33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."*

The first verses of Psalm 37 may be summed up in four imperatives; "Trust, do good, dwell, and eat". Firstly, we are called to what we refer to as the doctrine of "Faith-Rest"; a complete trusting in the Lord's provisions, directions, and power to achieve His Plan for our life, no matter what the politicians do to us. Trusting in the Lord means that we fellowship with the Lord daily, and so we draw deep strength from Him and focus upon Him alone for our security and power to walk his assigned path for our life. As we saw above, the Word of the Lord is clear, "In all your ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct your paths". **Proverbs 3:6.**

God calls us to living fellowship and close walking on the revealed path, and then total dependence upon the Lord for all provisions on that path. Having committed our way to the Lord we "dwell" where we are called to work and witness, then focus simply on "doing good". This means doing what is "divine good" rather than human viewpoint "good". It means we follow God's priorities rather than our own, or other financial and career advisers. Our focus is the "well done" of the Lord, not the measures of success from men. **Matthew 21:21-23.** We then eat what the Lord has provided with thankfulness, saying grace over all He provides and being content with the Lord's provisions.

If we walk the Lord's Path for us, we will have a place to dwell and food to eat so that we can serve into our older years. All houses decay, and title to homes is nothing but legal fiction, for all land passes to others eventually and we are buried in the earth itself. We do not own the earth; it is our grave. Let us keep the perspective of the Lord on all things here and see that we are temporary dwellers upon the earth, and this world is here for us to use, but not be distracted by its pleasantness into thinking it matters and lasts, for it does not. Trust and obey the call of the Lord upon your life. Be obedient to the Lord and serve Him in all things he calls you to do right to the end, for in the place of called service you will have a house to live in and food to eat to maintain you in your pilgrim walk.

Verse 4. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

We either delight in temporary things we will leave behind, or we delight in the relationships we have that will last forever; few find they can do both. We either value things that decay or we value relationships and service to others, and if it is Christ centred, it is eternal in its significance. If we delight in the Lord and in his service, then our desires are for his glory and fulfilling our ministry before Him. If this is our desire, then we serve with joy and we receive the blessing of the Lord in all things we do. **Psalm 43:4, Isaiah 58:11-14, Philippians 4:4-7.**

Psalm 104:33-34

"33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD."

Our delighting in the Lord opens the door to absolute focus upon his plan for our life and then the fulfilment of that plan through Holy Spirit empowered living. All our prayers are then focused upon the fulfilment of God's Plan for our life, and our desires are all then directed towards the plan, and so they are all answered and everything we desire is provided, for all our desires are doctrine saturated and directed.

Read slowly and carefully the following three passages of the Word. **John 15:7, 16, 2 Corinthians 10:5, Romans 12:1-2.** We open the door to eternal blessing and temporal guidance by absolute focus upon the path the Lord has for us, and we keep that door open by daily worship and praise. Daily worship involves bible study that shifts the thinking processes into the paths of God for us and we are truly a blessed older generation who can tune in to the internet and hear or watch messages from many preachers who are faithful to the Word. As we think God's way by saturating ourselves in God's Word, so our very desires are oriented towards the work of the Lord, and so these godly desires are always going to be met 100%.

1 John 5:14-15

"14. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us:

15. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Let us walk through this day with focus upon the Lord's path for us and let us commit to be his servants this day, and to keep our eyes away from the temptations to distraction by the "things of this world". Let us not be like Demas, **2 Timothy 4:10**, and be enticed away from the path of eternal life into temporary wealth and power and apparent security, for its just a mist.

Delight in the Lord and his path for you through this life. Educate your desires with Bible doctrine and saturate your thinking with the words of Psalmists, Prophets, our Lord Jesus and the Apostles, and so shift your thinking into the paths of God for you. That way every desire

and thought is “captured” by Christ, and every desire will be correct, powerful and fully answered by the Lord. **Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 10:5.**

Verses 5-6. “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”

Notice how closely these verses tie into the words of Solomon later in Proverbs 2 and 3, as we saw above. David is opening the door of understanding for his son by this late Psalm written while Solomon was a teenager, and he would have heard it standing by his father’s throne. In his own early life he applied it, but sadly, like Demas, he slipped into lust rather than prayer and so his grip on eternal blessings slipped to be replaced by temporal pleasure. Solomon faced temptations that were greater than any man before or since in the pleasure area, but he had the doctrines from his father here in this psalm to keep him safe, but he valued pleasure above the Word for much of his life. **1 Kings 11:4-10.** He did however bless all future generations by recording his reflections on his poor choices in Ecclesiastes, which we will look at later.

Commit your way totally to the Lord; rest solely in his path for your life and devote yourself to it. Trust totally in the Lord’s path, person and power, and he will bring to pass all the elements of the plan in your life, for it is his own plan for you! There is no doubt that the Lord can provide, for all he calls us to achieve he will ensure is achieved. God has the power and the ability to bring all things to pass that are required. **Isaiah 50:2, 59:1.**

Commit your ways to the Lord and he will bring into your life the “righteousness”, or spiritual prosperity that is required to achieve all that is asked of you with joy and other fruits of the Holy Spirit. **John 10:10, Galatians 5:16-24.** You will see the blessing of the Lord over your life but only as you advance on the Lord’s path for you. It will “come to light” as you focus upon the path of the Lord for you. God’s verdict over your life will be given with blessing eternally and will be as bright as the noonday sun. You will be blessed in the Lord as you commit your path to Him and seek from Him alone the power to walk it. **Ephesians 3:19, 5:1-2, 18.**

Praise the Lord this day for his person, his plan for your life, and the power to achieve all things in the plan to eternal glory. Commit totally to the Lord’s path, person and plan, for in his path alone there is temporal and eternal blessing in abundance. God will “bring to light” all the blessings that are worth having in this life on his path for you through this life. Walk his path alone older believer; seek no other path. He will bring the path to fruition, for his good name depends upon it. If he lets you down, he loses more than you; he loses his reputation! God will never do that. Commit your path and make it God’s for you, and so receive all he has for you in this life.

“Trust in the Lord, hand your life over to him and he will bring your righteousness to light as the morning sun, and your justification as the noonday”. C.f. Proverbs 4:18

Verse 7. “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.”

“Stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord”. **Exodus 14:13, Psalm 62:1.** Just as the Children of Israel had to see and learn this truth, so do we. Rest in the character, and in the plan of God and wait for the Lord to move the mountain before you. God will at times place us in exactly the same sort of impossible situations as he did the Exodus generation, and this is not to be “mean” with us, it is to teach us to trust and obey. As we get older it is harder to wait for God’s timing for events, because we think we don’t have the time to wait – but its God’s Plan and so the timing is His! Precious in His sight is our time for death. **Psalm 68:20, 116:15.**

God delights in our obedience against all human odds, when we trust his Word above what our own eyes tell us! God seeks our trust, and he will place us in places where this might build and grow strong so that eternal rewards might be won to His glory and our blessing forever. Our life is in the Lord's hands, so our death is to be of no concern to us, daily obedience to each command is to be our only focus.

Zechariah 4:6-10

"6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

8. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

10. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

Do not get anxious about, nor be envious of the wicked man who, following satanic logic and using devious plots and plans, is able to gain temporary prosperity and power in this world. He may appear successful in all his dealings for a time, for Satan will look after his own for a time, but it is only "for a limited time". All the plots and plans of evil men are limited in time and space, for they depend upon satanic logic and that is creaturely logic, whereas the believer who walks in the Holy Spirit's power and under God's direction walks in a plan worked out with eternal divine logic and foreknowledge. We cannot fail in time or eternity on God's path, whereas Satan and his people cannot but fail in the end.

Do not allow any envy or jealousy to grow within; pull up all such thoughts quickly before they rot your soul and dampen down your spirit. **Hebrews 12:10ff.** Evil men and women will receive rewards for their plans and schemes, but their rewards are brief and their judgment eternal. **Revelation 20:10-15.** Rest in the Lord's provisions and in the Lord's plans for you, for they are perfect. Do not doubt the provisions of the Lord. The Lord will provide all that we need to walk his path and achieve his goals for our life. Wait upon the Lord and he will provide for you all you need for victory. You won't run out of time to do every single thing the Lord wants you to achieve – it's His Plan for Your Life so it cannot fail if you walk **with** Him.

Verses 23-24. **"The steps of a [good] man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth [him with] his hand."**

God will establish your steps on the path of his choosing for you. Walk his narrow mountain path and be delivered by His power through to glory. **Matthew 7:13ff.** God establishes our feet on firm ground on the way through this life. **Psalms 17:5, 119:122, 121:3-8, 85:13.** There is stable ground no-where else than in the path of God for us. God delights in our walking his path and blesses us on the way. As we age our human strength fails, but God's Plan remains stable and His Power is constant and dependable – rest upon that power in prayer every moment.

Proverbs 4:20-27

"20. My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

21. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

22. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

23. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

24. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

25. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

26. *Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.*

27. *Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”*

Walk in the blessing of the Lord. Walk in the firm places of his will for you, not the shifting sands of men’s opinions, or into the mud and quick sands of materialism. God delights in the way of the righteous and pours his blessings upon us as we focus only on his will for our lives. Let us seek the firm path of God’s will, not the apparently restful path of man’s opinions, for it is deceptive and will only ever lead to our destruction.

Verse 25. “**I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.**”

David can look back over sixty or more years now and he reflects the truth as he has seen it, that those who walk with God are kept by God. Not all believers can claim this, any more than they can claim Romans 8:28, as the key reason for claiming the Lord’s blessing is being able to affirm the Lord’s path and your love for the Lord’s path and Him above all else in your life.

The righteous will not be forsaken, but those who harbour sin in their life will be turned away from by God, and we have his word on that! **Psalm 66:18, Isaiah 1:15, 59:1-2, 64:6, Jeremiah 5:25.** We have a daily choice for blessing or judgment, and we must make it by thorough self-examination and confession of any sin we discover being cherished within us. As we get older, we get physically weaker and so need to be more vigorous in self-examination and elimination of sinful thoughts, for they will disable what little strength may remain if we leave errant thoughts unchallenged. **2 Corinthians 13:5-9, 1 John 1:5-10.**

If you want to have enough to eat and work for the Lord, focus all your energies walking on the path of the Lord and he will provide for you on that path. Righteousness will never be forsaken by the Lord, and so walking in the breastplate of his provided righteousness keeps you safe, secure and fruitful. Walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit and walk securely believer or allow carnality to destroy you! Don’t complain about this, get with the Lord’s policy and be blessed!

Verse 26. “**[He is] ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed [is] blessed.**”

God’s nature is merciful, and that is why we can relax in our prayers asking for mercy and grace, for it is in his nature to give these things. **Psalm 112:5-9.** As God is merciful so are his righteous people, and this verse especially reminds us that the righteous have a habit of mercy and giving to others in need. If we claim to be the Lord’s people as we get older, we must resemble him in all ways in our character or we are open to the correct label of “fraudsters” or hypocrites (play actors).

As He loved us, so we love (agape – caring and practical love) others. This means towards the lost we give them the Gospel message. **John 16:8-11, Acts 3:4-10, 4:8-14.** Towards the brethren love and mercy means we meet their material needs as we are enabled to with the blessings the Lord has blessed us with. **John 15:12-14, James 2:14-18, 2 Corinthians 8-9.**

James 2:14-20

“14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

15. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*

16. *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

17. *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

18. *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

19. *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*

20. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"*

Those who do not show love to others do not know God, let alone have a saving relationship with him. **John 15:4-17, 1 John 3:11-19, 4:7-8, 19.** The parents show love in Christ and the children will receive blessing by association with their loving parents. Hypocrites who claim to be followers of God and "righteous" are exposed as "fraudsters" (claiming they have something to offer that they do not possess) by their lack of mercy and love to their brethren. **Galatians 6:10, James 2:18-26.**

We are under no obligation to feed and clothe those who hate the Lord and are members of Satan's team, for their poor and wretched state may be God's way to bring them to salvation. As we get older, we ought to be more discerning about how love is expressed, giving the gospel to the lost, but provision as we are able to brethren in genuine need. Discernment is critical here, for things given to those who are on the enemy's team are things unable to be later given to a brother or sister in real need. We are responsible for them to the Lord!

1 John 3:11-16, 4:7-8, 20-21.

"11. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

4:7. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

19. We love him, because he first loved us.

20.. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Do not be upset when mocked by fraudsters/hypocrites believer, just check their fruit and expose the enemy's agents who seek to infiltrate the church and destroy it from within. If people have no mercy towards the genuine poor and needy brethren then they are not genuinely saved, nor do they know Jesus at all, no matter what they say. Righteousness always bears fruit in the life, and not just in the life of that person but in the life of their children who are blessed in their father and mother's loving and merciful actions. Remember God's Word - Children are not ever judged for their parent's sins, **Jeremiah 31:29-31, Ezekiel 18:2-4, John 9:1-7.** Children are however always blessed for their parent's righteous actions.

Verse 27. "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore."

The appeal here is heart-felt on David's part for he knows the eternal, and temporal, benefits of righteousness. The blessing of the Lord goes on forever and as we get older, as David is here in this Psalm, we need to passionately affirm this truth. Those who determine in their hearts to walk in the Spirit and do well are placing themselves on the path of eternal blessedness. Those who walk away from the path of the Lord Jesus are walking downhill on the "broad way that leads to destruction". **Matthew 7:13-23, Revelation 20:10-15.**

It is an active daily choice to “depart from evil”, and those who pull back from total commitment to righteousness pull back from eternal life itself. God wants our whole-hearted commitment to his path. **Psalm 34:14, Proverbs 16:6, 17, 2 Timothy 2:19**. There are only the two blunt options, and each man and woman must select their own eternal path, and they must do so daily as they walk through this life. There are no short cuts to blessing, only the path of obedient faith in the Lord. Oh brother, sister, as we get older by the day let us select a spiritual walk as the prophet Isaiah encourages us.

Isaiah 1:16-20

“16. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17. Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”

The results and consequences of obedience in all these matters of faith are eternal in their significance. Feeling our age each day, we don't focus on our increasing debility, we are encouraged by the saints of the past to focus on God's love for us and walk the path with joy looking daily for the opportunity to be a blessing to others.

1 John 2:15-17

“15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Believer, depart from any thought of evil and the pathways of evil men who desire your company in their short term fun and long term misery. Walk away from evil places and evil men and women and have nothing to do with all their acts. Follow after righteousness alone. There are eternal consequences for all actions in space-time. Follow after the things that have eternal blessedness in their wake, not evil and disaster.

Verse 28. “For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.”

God loves justice and will always be absolutely just and fair with us, for his reputation depends upon it. God loses more than us if we are let down; he loses his good name, and He will never do that! Walk with the Lord Jesus and you walk in precious fellowship through life and into heaven itself. **Acts 7:51ff**. God does not leave, abandon, or let loose his saints; he loves and upholds and supports us all. **Psalm 92:13-15**.

We have eternal security with the Lord through our faith in Christ Jesus, for He upholds us. We are secure in his arms. **Deuteronomy 33:27**. The lost are however truly “lost” to hope and eternal life, for they have walked away from it. They receive what they wanted, and sadly what they desire is eternal separation from God – but it is more catastrophic than they deluded themselves into thinking. **Revelation 20:10-15**.

Isaiah 30:15-18

“15. For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

16. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

17. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

18. And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.”

God is absolutely fair and just in all matters of salvation and in provision for us. The Lord will never let his people down, for he will not ever let down his own plan and purposes for his own people, and will never act against his own character. We may fail the Lord, but he will not fail us. **2 Timothy 2:12-13.** The wicked have made their life choice and they will face the eternal consequences of that in eternal judgment. They will be “cut off” from eternal life, for they have chosen to walk away from God. Let’s now look together at the second of my “rock psalms” and refresh our spirit again as we are encouraged by the older psalmist to rest in the Lord as days drag in depressive sadness and bones ache.

Psalm 71:7-18. “I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. 8. *Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.*

9. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

10. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,

11. Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.

12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

13.. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

15. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.

16. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.

17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.

18. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”

Verse 7. “I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.

8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.”

Many look on at David and wonder at his life and his achievements, but others look at his sins and troubles and wonder whether God was indeed with him and maybe whether he was a believer at all.... David is not concerned about the doubts of men regarding his life, for he is the servant of the Lord and he is God’s Man. He was sure that he was a sinner in need of a Saviour, and he was absolutely sure that he had found his Saviour in God. He is absolutely sure of his position in the hands of the Lord and he is absolutely sure that all will praise the Lord when they look back at his life, and he is determined to praise God all through his life.

David wants every day to be a day for praise and honour to the Lord. **Psalms 145:1-2.** With the older David let us praise the Lord with our whole heart and rejoice in His holy name with our entire spirit. In tired voice we can still praise His name and we will discover that tiredness will often lift through worship. **Isaiah 61:3** is proved true again and again, as the “Garments of Praise put off the Spirit of Heaviness...”. The book on Heaven was written during a time when

I was so tired, after an exhausting year, that I just longed for rest, but none came. The book did however come and in the filling of the Holy Spirit's power I was refreshed as I wrote it. I have still not had any "holiday" and feel the weariness, but also the Holy Spirit's power daily.

Verse 9. "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together."

It is the latter days of David by the time he weaves this prayer together. Heart disease stops his life enjoyment eventually and his circulation slows to an extent that he cannot get warmth to his extremities. **1 Kings 1:1**. He is coherent until the end but debilitated by the disease. He suffers at the end, and it may be that as the circulation problems advanced, he prayed this prayer, weaving together the Psalms of early days to form this new testimony of faith in his old age and increasing debility. **Philippians 3:10** is not a verse most like reading, but for many of us our older age is understand more of the "fellowship of his suffering" as we face our own.

David wins the Crown of Glory, **1 Peter 5:4**, for endurance under suffering, and possibly also the Crowns of Life and of Righteousness, for faithfulness under trials. **2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12, Revelation 2:10**. David is not complaining about his debility, he is resting upon the Lord in faith, and he is blessed in the midst of his suffering, and he is blessed eternally and is crowned with many crowns forever. Refer below to the study REWARDS AND CROWNS.

When I wrote these words first as part of the Psalms Commentary I had just helped by daughter move flat, and at 58 years of age then my strength had failed me. Even though I stayed fit with daily weight work outs and walking I got thoroughly worn out by the lifting involved. I didn't despair, but I groaned at times through that day, and also chuckled as I acknowledged, that I was getting older. The same assurance that kept David in his latter years was/is mine and it is yours believer; the Lord will not forsake us as our strength forsakes us at times. The enemies of the Lord are our enemies and they will keep plotting against us if we keep standing for the Lord. People without enemies are not doing anything! Jesus told us we would have enemies. **John 15:18ff**. The challenge is to make sure that they are the "right ones"; they must be the people who hate God also. The right enemy = the right company!

Verse 11. "Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help."

The enemy will have a malice that surprises many but should not surprise a good student of the Word of God. The enemies of David mocked him and the Lord's care over him and saw his pressure as the opportunity to abuse him and persecute him at a higher level than they had to date. They made the mistake of seeing the pressures on him as evidence that God was not there to help him, but the pressures were simply opportunities for faith to grow, and the Lord was waiting to act until the right time.

The enemies are wrong, and David asks the Lord to move close and assist now to silence them fully and finally. David casts his care upon the Lord for he knows that the Lord will deliver him and silence those who mock the believer and the one true God. David feels the urgency of his situation in these latter years exactly as he does in his early years. This is an encouragement to me as I struggle still with patience under pressure, but I draw comfort from David's own struggle as he gets older. He knows the Plan of God is perfect and that all is there for him, but he still pleads, because worry is in his heart, and it's Okay to be worried and cast these fears upon the Lord's whose plan and power protects our path to the very end.

Verse 13. "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt. 14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more."

It is absolutely appropriate to pray that those who persistently seek to distress the soul of the believer might be judged and defeated. Those who seek our hurt will be judged by the Lord for their wickedness and malice. It is EVIL and it is SIN that they practise, and if they do not repent, they will be eternally judged. They will be covered with the dishonour they deserve in the end. They will be covered with reproach for their evil treatment of the Lord's people.

We must await the Lord's judgement to see this, but it is certain, just as our deliverance is certain. Let us praise the Lord for all His good works on our behalf. At times we must bear the reproach of evil men. We will be "despitefully used" and abused by evil men, and our challenge is to continue to pray for their salvation, for while they live there is hope for their salvation. **Matthew 5:43-48, John 16:8-11.**

Verse 15. "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. 16. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

We do not know the years of our life. **Psalms 40:5,12, 139:17-18.** None of us know how long we are to walk upon this earth, and we do not need to, for each and every day is to be treated by us as if it is our last. We are urged throughout the scripture to "number our days", and that means to value each day as a gift from God to be used for His glory and service. **Deuteronomy 32:29, Psalms 90:12, Luke 12:16-21, 35-38, Ephesians 5:15-18.** Refer to the BTB study below on TIME. As long as we live, we are challenged to praise the Lord with all our strength.

David commits to this, so that even as he becomes more debilitated with his cardio-vascular condition he will continue to praise the Lord with any strength he has each and every day. He recognises that it is only the strength of the Lord that enables him to go on through life. As we get older, we become more struck by this fact, but it is so obvious! In early years we are fooled by our own strength thinking it will last. In the Lord alone is our strength; we have no strength to cope with the problems of this world in the strength of any other. As we get older let us praise the Lord more and more for what He has done, is doing and will do forever.

Verse 17. "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18. Now also when I am old and grey headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

It is good to remember that the Lord has taught us since the beginning of our walk with Him, and this is why we are so blessed by finding the Creator in the days of our youth. It is good to constantly remember the blessing of the Lord and praise His holy name every time we recall His goodness to us. God has worked wondrously for us, and He is worthy of our praise. Let us praise the name of God.

David now tells us in verse eighteen that he is old and grey headed. He is not old according to Western standards in the early 21st century, for he is only in his mid sixties, but his hard life since earliest days has worn him out and the cares of rulership since the age of thirty has taken its toll. Many are care worn by 60 and feel old by 50 because of the stressors of their life, and David is an encouragement to all who have had a hard road in this world.

David wants to die having used every last bit of life he has demonstrating the power of God over him. Like Paul in **2 Timothy 4:6-8** David wants to pour himself out as a libation offering to the Lord right to the last day – this is our standard also. David wants his people to praise God because of what he has done and what he has stood for, written in the Psalms and illustrated

in his life choices. David's heart prayer is answered; both his petition and his desire. Refer to the BTB study on PRAYER below in the Doctrines Section.

Even David's great past sin becomes a testimony of grace and mercy. **2 Samuel 22:2-51, 24:14, 24, 1 Kings 1:28-35, 2:1-4.** David's desire is that his life might be a blessing to the people alive at the time, but also his testimony might be a blessing to all people who will follow after him. This prayer request was also granted, for he ensured that all his life's work was recorded and copied, so that even his sins could instruct those who followed him that they might not fail as he did. David's words keep on encouraging us through until today, and they will do so until time ends, and maybe sung even into eternity itself. His Psalms will certainly be sung in the Millennial Temple.

Psalm 92:12-15. *"12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

13. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

15. To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

Verse 11. **"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."**

This passage has been applied specifically to the Lord, and it certainly does apply to the Lord, and is quoted by Satan to Him in that regard. **Matthew 4:5-7.** Do not stop with that application however, for that is not the whole story. Even though the Lord has special angelic protection, we all have guardian angels assigned to us. This is the clear teaching of this scripture and the other key passage from **Hebrews 1:13-14, 2:5-9.** Refer below to the BTB study ANGELS.

We will stub our toes at times, and we will have things go wrong at times in our life, but the angels are there to keep us from any disaster that will stop us achieving the plan and purposes of God. We are secure with the Lord as we walk with the Lord to achieve His purposes alone. Let us devote our attention to that and take the stubbed toes and car troubles to Him and cast them before Him, for He cares and will ensure we have what we need to achieve the plan.

Verse 13. **"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."**

The greatest of the wild and dangerous animals is of no concern to us, and the smallest of the deadliest creatures is of no concern while we walk with the Lord 100%. To tread upon the neck of an enemy was to achieve total victory, and the treading here indicates victory over the forces of nature. The Lord has set His love upon us as His children and we will be blessed in this life, even if at times in the midst of adversity and troubles. His banner over us is love and it is love shown on the Cross, and it is ours to the end of our life. **Song of Solomon 2:4.**

During the Millennial Kingdom, when the Lord Jesus rules over this earth, these verses will find their total fulfilment for all mankind, for all that is fierce will be gone, or tamed, and the goodness of the creation alone will be seen as it was originally made before sin fouled the nest. To know and worship the name of the Lord is to be in the place of blessing under the Lord and it is to be in the place of total safety with the Lord's protection over us. The most wonderful thing about our relationship with the Lord is that He knows our name; we are known by the Lord, and are special recipients of His grace, His love, and His mercy.

Verse 15. “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.”

Through the psalmist the Father makes solemn promises to the Son here, and to all who stand with the Son in the power and plan of the Lord their God. We will cry aloud to the Lord, and we will be heard. We will be heard, and we will be delivered by the Lord, when we cry unto Him. We will live “long”; that is, we will live right up until the time allotted to us upon this earth and our life will be full before the Lord.

No believer serving the Lord in spirit and in truth dies “early”. We all die in exactly the right time for our entry into heaven. **Psalm 68:20, 116:15**. To us some deaths appear early to us, but they are “long life” to the Lord, for that obedient believer has lived their full allotted time upon the earth. Only the SIN UNTO DEATH stops any believer living a full and long life.

Let us trust in the Lord and rest secure in His care and protection over us. The Lord alone can deliver us from the plans of evil men and so let us affirm His care over us and celebrate His love and plan for our future. Our life is in His hands, and so we are safe there. Let us advance forward in this life without any concern for our life, for in the Lord we are secure until the right time to go home to heaven. Let us relax about the stressors of life or fears of death and focus only on doing what the Lord has called us to do as the last years tick by.

On God’s “narrow path” for our life we are thoroughly protected people, with the Holy Spirit within us and the angels around us. The believer is secure within the care of the Lord, and so we are called to stand in the strength that the Lord, the Holy Spirit and the Word give us. We are safe while we walk 100% down the path the Lord has called us to, neither deviating to the right or the left. We are to focus only on walking where the Lord wants us to walk, and then our safety is in His hands 100% and we can relax 100%. Let us claim this promise and walk in confidence.

We walk with the Lord, and so let us pour our heart out to Him and fellowship with Him every day of our life. To the Lord belong the issues surrounding our death. **Psalms 68:20, 116:15**.

Notes

4. Solomon does not hide the “awful truths” of Aging – Ecclesiastes 11-12.

INTRODUCTION

Solomon continues his advice to those who wish to really confront reality as they walk through this life rather than be deceived by the philosophers of worldliness. His words are particularly addressed to those who want to walk through this world without a living, saved and sanctified relationship with the Lord their God. He is blunt and straight shooting in his words, and almost boring in his tone. Ecclesiastes is a book that finds the philosophy of worldliness boring, and this is a correct assessment.

Solomon has reflected deeply upon his own worldly journey, and he wants the unbeliever to really reflect upon their walk through this world and see that they need to confront the truth about the “one way” nature of every walk – for we all walk towards eternity and the faith-walk with Jesus is the only pilgrim journey that has any significance. As we get older this reality should grip our heart, as it does Solomon in this little but powerful book.

We leave this earth one day, and we need to factor that reality into every step we take and not be fooled by the “joys of youth” into wasting time that we will not have again. Every day is a gift from God and is a day for which we will be held responsible by the creator for doing what He ordered. We have a path to walk while here, and we are responsible and accountable for the “outcomes” the Lord expects of us. As we age are we gripped by this?

ECCLESIASTES 11:1-10

1. *Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*
2. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.*
3. *If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*
4. *He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.*
5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*
6. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*
7. *Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:*
8. *But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.*
9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement.*
10. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.”*

Verse 1. “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

2. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.”

Older people often go to parks and feed the ducks, but that is not Solomon’s encouragement here as a time filling meaningless activity, for this is a picture of productivity in his day. When bread is cast upon water it dissolves quite quickly and soon is gone. Bread cast upon the waters in Solomon’s day was either to feed fish in a fish farm, or feed ducks, or other water birds for later eating. In both cases the wholemeal Pita bread is probably old and stale and the

throwing of it away upon the waters always brings rewards in the later food obtained from the birds or the fish. Though the bread cast upon the waters disappears quickly, it is transformed into other food in the bodies of the fish or fowl “after many days” and the person who threw the old bread away reaps a benefit from it. Message = Use all things you have for later blessing.

The next proverbial saying (verse 2) has traditionally also been interpreted as an encouragement to charity, and as such, an assurance that anything given to others, even if it is your old stale bread, will return to you later to your benefit. Whatever we cannot use ought to be recycled into the community and be used by someone, or for something. We are to be good stewards of all the Lord’s bounty to us. As we age so does our clothes and shoes and other goods and nothing should rot on any shelf but be given to others while they can use it and be blessed.

We cannot know what will befall us in each new day and so there is wisdom in being careful about our goods and our food, but being careful also means being ready to give things away or invest widely and spread our investments given the uncertainties of the future. In English the proverbial saying that expresses verse two here is, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”. If you have an investment to make, divide it into seven or eight portions and spread the risk around by so doing. The Arab traders had a similar saying, “Don’t put all the goods on one caravan, for if it is attacked you lose it all”.

No-one fully knows the evils that are out in the world and so it is best to be very prayerful about all business and travel decisions. Impetuous and risk-taking behaviours are not advised by Solomon. We have seen in the WFC years 2007-2012 the dangers to investors in trusting “fund managers” with all their investments. Large funds have been destroyed by the greed and fraud of their managers, and those who placed all their funds into one place have lost everything. There is a double challenge to the older person here in these two verses; both to be charitable and spread your old goods for blessing widely and be careful of business and spread your risks in all investment decisions. The central point is that God alone is your security, and you need decision making based on eternal values and God’s Plan for your life.

Verse 3. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. 4. He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”

There are natural processes that mere mortals have no control over whatsoever. Where the rain is going to fall is the cloud’s decision (with God) not the farmer. The great frustration, even today, for farmers is seeing needed rain blow over your own farm and then raining on another area a few miles away. No farmer has control over this. Even so called scientific “rain making” is imprecise in its results. Clouds cannot be controlled, but even quite solid things like trees also are beyond our control when we cut them down, for they may fall unpredictably and damage or hurt in ways we did not foresee.

When a tree is cut it falls, and once it starts to fall no-one can stop it, and where it lands, that is where it lays. I once cut down a tree in my home garden. I thought I had worked it all out well, but as it came down it turned to the left and squashed a pool fence. Once the tree began its fall it was beyond any effort of mine to change it. I then got in the tree professionals for another job, and they cut another one of these same trees, and just as it started to fall a great unexpected gust of wind caught its canopy and it changed direction, fell over my neighbour’s hedge, and landed right on the roof of their Mercedes Benz! The insurance companies made and lost some money that day!

There are things we cannot control once they start moving. Even though the forces of nature are powerful and unpredictable we still need to step out and work in the midst of the

uncertainties of nature. It “might rain”, and it “might snow”, and it might be a storm later, but we cannot be sure. If we wait around for what might happen or stop working because of what might occur in the weather, then we will never get anything done. This proverbial saying does not argue against intelligently reading the signs of nature and working in accordance with the facts that experience teaches us, but it confronts us with the limits of our predictive abilities.

We don't sow unless there will be a good chance of rain to germinate the seeds. We don't reap the crop if it may get spoiled by the rains and winds before the grain is separated from the chaff. These things are basic farming protocols, but if we are wise, we do not operate on the basis of predictions that tie us up in complex systems of calculations that do not add anything to our ability to do the job before us. Many get so complicated about their ability to “read the signs of the times” that they end up not doing anything; they just sit around and debate things! Solomon is saying here; stop talking about the weather, just interpret the signs practically, and get on with the work! You are here to sow and reap, so be Holy Spirit filled daily and “just do it” believer! **Proverbs 20:3-4, 22:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10.**

Verse 5. “As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. 6. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”

There are mysteries in this life that we never understand. The way the Holy Spirit works is a mystery, and even the way the spirit of a person works at some times and not at others, and then leaves the body in death is a mystery. As I first wrote these words my dear old mother had died the day before and her dead body was totally different in appearance to her body when alive; her spirit had left and gone to be with the Lord. She was totally changed by this and only a shell was left behind. These things are basic realities and yet we do not understand them at all. Why is it that we think we know so much and argue about inconsequential things, when the deep mysteries of human life and death are beyond us?

The ancients could look at the development of a child in the womb and like us they stood amazed. Even understanding a little of how the bones develop from the protoplasm foetus we still stand in awe of God's work. From a few cells to a tadpole and then fish shaped embryo, and then to a fully formed child over a period of eight months! It is amazing! The power and scope of the development of a human baby from a fertilized cell is the equivalent of an orange becoming the size of the earth itself!

The development of the human baby is marvellous and amazing indeed and God made all things with this wonder in their heart. Solomon calls for the arrogance of man to bow before the mysteries of the creation. We are called to do the work assigned and leave the results to the Lord. If we are to sow then we sow, if reap, then we reap, and we accept that we have no ability to change or affect the outcomes of our work. The challenge is to do our work and leave our lives in the Lord's hands! **Haggai 1:5-11, 2:4-5, Zechariah 8:9-15.**

Verse 7. “Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: 8. But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.”

For every light and bright day there is a dark and scary night. There is both good and bad for each of us upon this earth and we must take all that comes and leave it with the Lord. It is always easy to rejoice in a lovely day, and even in the midst of the cold of winter a clear blue sky lifts the spirit. It is a really pleasant thing to look up into a clear sky and see and feel the sun upon your face. It is not wrong to rejoice in such things, but it is foolish to forget the other

reality; that dark and death are also walking with us through this life. It is the presence of God alone that stabilizes our mind and heart as we advance.

We have many lovely summers and many hard winters. We will enjoy the feel of the sun, but we must also be ready for the stabbing cold and darkness of the winter nights when a wrong decision to stay outside too long will kill us with exposure. We must also remember that the dark of death comes to us all, and while we enjoy the summer of our youth, reflect upon the temporary nature of all the pleasure and fun we enjoy. This is not a “kill joy” attitude, for Solomon is not saying, “don’t enjoy”, he is simply saying, “enjoy in the light of the end of your life”.

All of our life comes to vanity unless there is eternal purpose in the midst of it. It is only the eternal purposes of God that transform the days of darkness into the joys of eternal rewards. Paul reflected upon this, noting that without the truth of the resurrection the believers would be the most miserable of people! **1 Corinthians 15:16-34, 2 Corinthians 4:8-11**. It is the end of a race that gives meaning to the start and the middle of the race! As we age it is good to look back and give thanks, and look ahead, and in Abrahamic faith give thanks in advance for what God is even yet to do with us as we get older – its not over till we see Him face to face.

Verse 9. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement. 10. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.”

It is important that we rise up and fly like eagles in our days of physical strength, for the days will come when we cannot do certain things. **Isaiah 40:38-41**. It is important for young people to be very active in their service of the Lord and step up to the mark and be strong in their faith. This does not involve being stupid, reckless, or immoral. We have a pagan saying regarding young people that they are “sowing their wild oats”. This is a way of saying that they are being immoral, but that they will grow out of it, and that it won’t do them any harm. This is a satanic falsehood, and it is an evil lying saying, and a false encouragement to young people to minimise sin and evil. To “sow wild oats” is to reap a crop of severe judgement later in life.

It is always wrong to walk along a path that is evil, and young people entering into sexual sin may destroy their sexual function for later life, and even lose their life in the process. All minimising of sin is satanic, and Solomon warns against anything that leads people into paths that are destructive and will certainly lead to God’s judgement. The stupidity of childhood lusts is foolishness and believers of all ages are to resist them. We are to enjoy our walk through life, and actively put away all sorrow from our hearts, but that does not mean denial of the truth, but acceptance of the truth. Sin causes sorrow and by putting away sexual sin and evil we put away unnecessary sorrow.

We are called to fight a great fight, not talk a great fight! Let us be busy in work, not just talking about work. God has called us to sow and reap, and so let us get into the fields and do the work assigned without worrying about the weather and the future outlook. Let us do our assigned work every day and leave the results in the Lord’s hands! **1 Peter 5:5-9**.

All is vanity and emptiness apart from the Lord Jesus power and plan guiding in our life. All the mysteries of life are just insoluble items of confusion to those who do not find the eternal realities of Jesus. Let us rejoice in the Lord and advance in his service through the uncertainties of this world. There is no other way to be happy upon this earth other than by serving the Lord in spirit and in truth. Let’s do it! Let’s do it daily!

Morality is not boring, it is life giving. Immorality is the path of sickness, regret and death. Let us never speak about “sowing wild oats”, for the crop that grows in the lives of the foolish is often fatal to them. Let us preach the truth about sexual sin and call it what it is and warn all about the earthly and eternal consequences for such foolishness.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12

Solomon ended chapter eleven with the warning against minimising sexual sin, and he begins this last chapter with the alternate command. We must not just avoid sin but actively chose daily to “follow after” righteousness. Spiritual growth is both a negative and a positive process; it involves both actively rejecting the deceit of satanic stupidity, and actively pursuing Bible doctrine’s application into our daily lives. We are to be hungry for the truth and have a holy hatred of the satanic counterfeits that advertise his evil alternatives to true spirituality.

ECCLESIASTES 12:1-14

- “1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;*
- 2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:*
- 3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,*
- 4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;*
- 5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:*
- 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.*
- 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*
- 8. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.*
- 9. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.*
- 10. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.*
- 11. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.*
- 12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*
- 13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*
- 14. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

Verse 1. “ Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:”

This first verse is used widely amongst youth work, but often not fully read to the end. We have broken the taboo about sex and talk freely of it, but not broken the taboo about age and death, and most avoid the subjects. This is not an option for the Bible teacher. We are called to preach the truth about the creation of mankind, and that involves teaching about the fall and

its consequences, and the “big one” for us is we age and get debilitated as we do so. The consequence of sin is often laboured on by preachers, but in the scriptures sin, sickness, disease, debility, and death are linked, and the accurate and truthful preacher links them in their preaching today.

We may each face old age with debility, and then often death with great discomfort because of the impact of Adam and Eve’s sin upon mankind. The “evil days come” to many, when with dementia, cancer, heart disease, bowel disorders and other debilitating diseases make life very hard for the elderly. Just speaking with three old people after my mother’s funeral service I was struck by their comments on the “evil days” that they see have come upon them.

The two older ladies both reported to be unable to walk without significant help now, and to be in pain all the time in their lower backs, which makes sleeping difficult. An older man said to me, “Would it be bad to say that I pray for the Lord to take me home?” He then told me of the stress of his heart condition and the steadily advancing cardiac failure causing dementia with its memory loss; all of which made his life unbearable without daily casting cares upon the Lord.

My old father said to me before my Mother’s death how he was having more harrowing days in his older debility than he had ever had in the toughest days of World War 2, where he served in action on a Cruiser at sea in the Royal Navy solidly for four years. Many get to their fifties and notice that their eye sight starts to fail. I had to get reading glasses at 51 and still remember the shock of that event, but not seeing all the stars is mild against the pain and debility that many face and that I now face in my seventies. The “clouds” over the vision are cataracts and other eye conditions that are still epidemic in the Middle East area.

Verse 3. “In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;”

The “keepers of the house” start to tremble. The arms and hands are the keepers of the house and the “strong men” are the legs. We don’t want to go too far, as some of the older Rabbis did and see the plague and other specific diseases here, for Solomon is being general here and referring to normal old age alone not plague.

The hands tremble and the arms lose their ability to lift, work, and fight to protect the head. The legs shake and grow weak, and the older person appears to shrink away and totter on their once strong legs. The “grinders” are clearly the teeth, and they are unable to chew solid food because there are so few of them unbroken and usable. The eyes grow dark and the person was often blind by the time they were of a great age in Solomon’s day.

What happens to the fragile and now vulnerable older person is that they tend to stay indoors more and more. In the ancient world as today, the old person was vulnerable and in a culture where a knock from a person moving quickly along the stone road would break a bone the elderly were nervous about going out into the narrow and congested streets.

Like many of the elderly, the person Solomon describes rises early with the birds because they cannot sleep. Deafness means they cannot hear the sounds of lovely music anymore and if they try to sing they cannot hold a tune anymore. My late mother used to quote her own mother’s observation about growing old as a farmer’s wife in the 1930s. She said, “This old age is no good”. Without God’s Plan being lived out prayerfully that is indeed the truth.

Solomon agrees whole heartedly and urges young people to visit the old folk's in their homes and pause long enough to reflect upon their own pleasures to ensure they are worthy and will not leave them jaded and frustrated when they too get as old as some of the residents they visit with. We are to enjoy the Lord's path for us through this life, but we are to do so with our eyes open to the end of the road. We must not end this life with resentment, frustration, irritation, or deep regret about the life we have lived.

Verse 5. "Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern."

One of the things about our vision in older age is the ability to judge distances declines and so fear of falling increases in proportion to the brain fearing it's unable to properly calculate things for safety. Night vision failing for driving is a modern expression of that reality. The elderly may become afraid of things that previously were fine for them. This may occur early in life as strength declines. As an officer in the Naval Forces I abseiled off large cliff faces and jumped out of helicopters into the sea, but unless my life was at real risk I would now avoid such activities like the plague.

The almond tree was the tree of the closeness of death in Israel; it was known as the "watcher". It is one of the first to flower after the worst of winter and is the "watcher of the spring season". It doesn't flower as it grows old and dies. Its shape was emblematic for some Rabbis of back trouble also. See the truth, but don't sit with the negative vision too long, but prayerfully ask daily, "Lord what is there to do today in your plan until I join you?"

The grasshopper is a very powerful creature, carrying ten times or more its own weight, but even carrying such a light "burden" as a grasshopper upon our shoulder is a worry and can be a danger for the elderly. They are unsteady on their feet with any load upon them. All things are a burden to them. High noises as well as high places can be scary to the elderly. An undulating road and rolling hills that were jogged over in youth are scary walks for the elderly or seriously ill because of the unsteadiness of their feet. Sexual desire is also gone for them. They know that for them life is heading down hill to its end, and the mourners are walking home in the streets, and they wonder when they will be walking home from their funeral. Refer to the BTB studies below on DEATH, DYING GRACE.

Solomon uses a number of images of death in verse six; poetic images which portray the awful reality of the severing of life and the end of that person's walk upon the earth. The strangeness of death is in view here. The beautiful pictures are all quite sinister underneath their shining beauty. The "silver cord" is a reference to the silver thread of life that is cut by the fates in Greek mythology, but this pre-dates their stories by 500 years! It is a reference to the beauty and fragility of life, not the paganism of the Greek's stories. Silver is the metal of redemption and stood for the perfect sacrifice of the Saviour for the sin of man. Refer to the BTB study REDEMPTION.

The next analogy is the image of vast expense and beauty; the golden bowl is shattered to pieces. It is a sign of great violence and was done by invading armies to looted gold bullion to smash it up ready to be melted down into a new item that they would make of it. It refers to the violent end of a life in battle or after invasion, whereas the silver cord being cut has a sense of timeliness and quiet deliberation about it. Our life is in God's hands, and the time of our death is in the Lord's hands also, and even though death may come with violence and the shattering of the body, we can be at peace in the midst of it as Stephen was. **Acts 7:51ff.**

The next two pictures are the picture of violence in the ordinary details of life in an agricultural economy that depended upon pure and readily available water supplies. Let us see the national and community impact of the images and then apply them to the debility/death of an older person. The breaking of the water supply system also indicates great ruin in a land that depends upon water. When the pitcher is shattered at the fountain it means that the local household is not going to receive water, but when the water wheel that brings the deep water to the surface is smashed then no-one is going to receive water in that town.

Let's now put the four images together as a picture of old age and the losses associated with older age. The first image of the silver thread being cut is a picture of the Lord's very deliberate action in ending an individual's life. Precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints. **Psalms 68:20, 116:15**. The second image is the shattering of the golden image and beauty of the bowl.

At our peak of physical fitness, intellectual agility, and business prowess we are like the golden bowl; we are attractive to behold and useful to others. At a time in our life we are an ornament at functions and we draw people to us as "beautiful people" who are pleasant to be around. Old age smashes this beauty like an enemy soldier smashes captured booty. It is as if old age is a violent destroyer of beauty, and at times that is an accurate picture.

Beautiful people become wrinkled, and their skin sags and tags develop everywhere. We lose the tone in muscles and the texture of our skin is altered. Beauty is indeed smashed by old age. The third image is of a worn old pitcher, the family's drinking water source, possibly been used for years to bring water to the household. The elderly have been the support people of our society; they have brought in the water of life to their families, but then old age breaks the pitcher at the fountain and the source is gone. Do we value the older believers around us?

There comes a day when the elderly cannot bring in the water to their family; they need care now and their days of caring for others are over. The final picture is the broken wheel, and this pictures the total loss of the mechanical ability to raise up the water of life; this is a fundamental break down of bodily systems. My old father expressed this last night to me when he said, "I just feel broken, as if a part of me isn't working any more". It wasn't just the grief of my mother's death that caused this observation but his increasing debility means his heart just isn't pumping the blood any more and the brain and lungs are starting to fail also. As my old mother used to say, "This old age is no good!" it is the reminder of the fall at Eden and the cost of sin amongst us. Let us however lift up our eyes to the Lord for these last days.

Verse 7. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. 8. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."

We are made of the dust of the earth. **Genesis 3:19, 18:27, Psalms 90:3-12, 146:3-4**. Rightly the psalmist tells us here, as we have seen earlier, to "number our days" and make the days count for the Lord. We are frail and foolish often, and the challenge is to face the reality of life and death and the need to live in a way that ensures we bring glory to God who gave us life and opportunities for service. We are here by the creative pleasure of God, and He has given us his breath to live, and expects us to serve him and give account for all we have done upon this earth.

God gives us life and when we die, He requires the temporary gift back, to replace it with eternal life, and to receive our account of how we used his gift with its return. Life is given and life is taken back and replaced with something greater! Everything is conscious in this universe and the controller is a loving Father, not a capricious pagan god in the model of the Greeks and Romans. Refer to the BTB studies FATHERHOOD OF GOD, GOD CARES FOR YOU. All is vanity if the individual man or woman seeks to live for things that are limited to

earth. Everything is meaningless and empty of significance **unless** it is enlivened by God and has God's eternal purposes guiding the life. **Psalms 62:5-9.**

Verse 9. "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. 10. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth."

Solomon doesn't stop preaching the truth to the people, even though he felt the hopelessness of his own life of sexual excesses. Solomon deeply feels the "vanity" of his wealthy but unsatisfying life. He is caught by his own logic in the trap of his own making. He deeply feels his own foolishness and pleads with his people to follow after true wisdom, not compromise with truth as he did. Solomon had the wealth and the power, but not the peace and the joy that he prayed would be his people's reward.

He searched out the truth and preached it and published books of proverbs for the people to read, that none might have the excuse of ignorance for not living as God wanted. Solomon sought the best way to express each truth and tried to make his work as powerful as he could and as useful as it could be for his people. **Proverbs 1:1-6, 8:6-10, 10:1, 15:23-26, 16:21-24, 22:17-21, 25:1, 11-12.**

Verse 11. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. 12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

Learning is not a pleasant activity at times. It may be painful, and it may be harsh when the truth is hammered hard into our reluctant heads. Solomon compares the power of the Word of God to the Ox goad that stopped the oxen from kicking the plough to pieces. The goad was there to stop the animal from getting out of control and damaging itself and the plough. Knowledge of Bible doctrine is God's way of keeping us safe from avoidable harm and the team of believers together and productive for the Lord.

The nails fastened together on the plough were there to strengthen it against the kicks of an ox that didn't like the job of pulling the plough, and they were left protruding to hurt the kicking ox enough to stop their "rebellion". The shepherd-lord is the one in charge of the farm and the one who has put together the equipment to achieve the farming goals. He is the "husbandman" of John 15:1ff. His concern is the safety of the animals and the productivity of the entire farm. All aspects of the farm are coordinated to ensure productivity. We are here to be productive for God's glory, not be oxygen thieves... **John 15:1-12.** Refer to the BTB study GOOD WORKS.

All the best skilled craftsmen are used to ensure that the plough is well made, and the workmanship perfect to protect/direct the animals and produce the crops. Everything is done to ensure that productivity is achieved, and that is the Lord's point regarding our own lives; we are here to produce good works for his Glory! The Lord requires it of us. We have the gift of life to achieve results for our creator and He has given us everything to achieve those results. **Matthew 25:15ff.** We have received so much at the point of salvation that we have all we need to really produce great things for the Lord's glory.

His promise was that "greater things" would we do in his strength after He was back in heaven, and a faithful servant achieves great things in the Holy Spirit's power. **John 5:20.** Like the oxen, we are here to pull the Lord's plough, and as his under-shepherds we are here to feed his sheep. **Luke 9:62, 17:7-10, John 21:15-25.**

All people who have had to study long and hard for their doctorate degrees love Solomon's verse twelve in this chapter. All of us have felt this at times and even people who would not normally cry aloud "Hallelujah" will cry it aloud at this verse. We do not need more books and more study, but we all need more application of the things already taught, heard, and believed. Wisdom is the result of hearing the truth, believing the truth, and over time applying the truth into the fabric of everyday life.

Solomon understands that unless we hear, believe, and apply the Word of Truth, that it will do no good to us. James picks this truth up in **James 2:19**. He notes that the devils themselves believe the truth about God and Christ because they know it is true, but they will not let the truth change them. It is not "ticking the box" in a doctrinal quiz of truth that saves or delivers us, but it is allowing the truth free reign in our spirit and being transformed by it that proves we are a genuine follower of Jesus Christ. Much study without believing and applied reality is indeed "much weariness", and it is totally useless. **James 2:20-26**.

Verse 13. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Solomon very bluntly and in straight forward language sums up the big lesson of the entire book. All that man does alone without reference to his creator is a waste of time and energy. It is only the things we do in the filling of the Holy Spirit that bring any lasting results of eternal value. Refer to the BTB studies on the FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, REWARDS AND CROWNS, and FEAR. It is the Lord's will alone that gives purpose and focus for us as men and women upon this earth, "under the sun". It is holy respect for the Lord that keeps us focused forward.

The whole duty of everyone born into God's world is to confront their creator and give an account of their life in a manner that does not bring disgrace upon that person. All we do in the power of the Old Sin Nature is wasted energy, but all we do in the power and filling of the Holy Spirit is rewardable for all eternity. The whole duty of each member of mankind is to bring glory to the name of the one who has given us life and provided the means to achieve amazing things upon this earth through Christ Jesus. We have the power of God and are able to do things in the Holy Spirit's power that make the devil squirm; let us do it daily with all the power God the Holy Spirit gives us! Holy Spirit power alone! All of us will stand before the Lord and give account; let us ensure that it is for glory, not for shame.

Without Holy Spirit power and focus, Old Age is "no good", as my dear late mother used to say. As we age we learn more and more about the Fall of Man and see the consequences in every ache and pain and disease our tired bodies are opened up to. Old Age is not meant to be pretty, but it is meant to be productive for believers. Even if we cannot work as hard as we once did, we can pray with power, and we are called to do that before the Lord. Let us be the prayer warriors we can be as we age and bring power to the younger believers who are still active in the battlefield. In the Christian Army, the elderly are promoted to the artillery of prayer to support the youthful infantry, and then we are promoted to heaven. Let us make sure we take each step towards heaven with our eyes fixed upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith!

We all return to the dust from which we were made in Adam. Given that our bodily destiny is such a base one, let us not get too fixated on appearance and things that do not matter or last. Let us realise that the things that matter, are important eternally, and they are spiritual and Holy Spirit driven. As we age let us walk in the Holy Spirit's power and so we will achieve the great things the Lord has called us to achieve right to the end of our earthly pilgrimage.

We will all give account for our time upon this earth “under the sun”. Let us walk in the Holy Spirit’s power, fear the Lord, and honour those in authority over us. Let us do the things we are called to do and not interfere in the tasking of others, except to pray powerfully for them. Let us advance in our service while we walk under the sun and let us advance into eternity with joy in our Lord who has given us everything we need to achieve all He has called us to do.

Notes

5. St Paul is very direct – Buy Up the Time – Ephesians 5:14-21, and 2 Corinthians 5:1ff.

Ephesians 5:14-21. *“14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

Don’t go to sleep on me there brethren! I remember one old pastor telling me not to wake up old men who fall asleep in church, as he humorously observed, “It may be the only safe place for them to nap”, and he then added, “When they wake up make sure you are saying something that was worth waking up for...”. “Others” is our motto, and we ought to be concerned for our brethren “in the fear of the Lord”. That means we are concerned about what the Lord will say of our performance through the years. We are right to be concerned about what the Lord will say of our priorities and the activities that will flow from our “to do list”.

Are we “God’s sleeping people”? If so, what is required to wake us up to spiritual realities? As we age it should be just the aches and pain we feel and the grey hairs we see in the mirror that remind us we have an appointment with the Lord soon. Let’s use whatever is our “wake up call” and broadcast the call to action for all, in order that every moment might be used for God’s glory and our encouragement.

Let’s walk “circumspectly”, which means to be careful where we place our feet, Hebrews 12:13, so that we are not tripping ourselves up by activities that are unhelpful or downright dangerous. How many are actually “unwise” as they get older, and rather than being careful keep getting injured doing thing that should be long past, and then not doing things that would be age-stage appropriate and useful to them and others. We are not here to prove we are still young and “can do x or y”, but to do what the Lord calls us to do before we leave this temporary planet!

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.** *“1. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
2. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:
3. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.
4. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.
5. Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.
6. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:
7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)
8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.
9. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

It's okay to “groan” in this body, and as Dr J Vernon McGee used to say, “Its actually biblical”. Having chuckled with Paul in verse two let's be as focused as he was, not on the aches and pains but on the temporary nature of our body that they draw attention to, and then focus above to the reality of our heavenly body waiting for us. How often do we reflect on our eternal life each day? If we think of it we will be more focused on using our present body to the full before we get to our “trade in” time and cross over through death's door into eternity.

As we age is this awareness growing? If not, maybe we are needing to be feeding on the Word more than we presently are doing. Do we have a regular audit of our life activities? Are we thinking about significance and legacy factors in our various activities? How much “filler” is there in the day's activities? Paul's encouragement to the Corinthians is to be thinking about the Lord's final assessment of their actions for eternal rewards and ensure that the majority of our time each day is spent in Holy Spirit filled power and so with eternal results.

Maybe our Sunday lunch could be usefully used to discuss with partner, family or friend the events of the week and discuss what was useful and powerful and what was just “time filler” and may need to be phased out. Some friend groups also need to shift, especially if they haven't moved on and we have. Where to now? Who do we want around us now? What to do now?

Where are we to serve the Lord now, as against where we may have been at home until this stage of our life? For some their bowling group is their mission and the sport is their passion, and they can evangelize or counsel there, where no regular minister could do the job. It's not that there is any intrinsic value in any area of activity. What gives an activity meaning is that it is where God wants you to be at this age-stage. What “works” for satisfaction and makes legacy for us will possibly shift through life's stages. Are we walking our path before the Lord as it needs to be now? This means not living a life we have lived, but its over now, and also not trying to live another's life because we think that's the standard. Peter was bluntly told to focus on his own life not John's life and do what he was tasked with. **John 21:20-25.**

Notes

6. What Do We Seek Here?

1 Corinthians 10:13, 24, 13:10. *“13. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it..... 24. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 13:10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”*

As we plod forward in older age let us be more guarded in our steps, ensuring we are staying on God's path for us in these last days of our pilgrimage. Let us be sure to “put away childish things”, when we are surrounded by our peers who are still trying to tick off “bucket lists’ of activities that are meaningless as we see death approaching. Its not climbing another mountain, abseiling another cliff face, bungee jumping another bridge or driving a faster sports car – its doing what is eternally significant in accordance with the Lord's Plan for our life.

Romans 8:26-28, *“26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

Have you ever claimed Romans 8:26 believer? Do you see the context of Romans 8:28 clearly now? It is after the message that things may occur to you in older years that you do not understand and feel hurt by to the extent that you may not be able to even find the words to express your sadness to the Lord. When that occurs, just claim Romans 8:26, and remember the “fellowship of his suffering”, and draw close to the heart of Jesus, for even in our distress His love for us continues to the maximum, but that love may be expressed in some “sand-papery” to smooth out our rough edges by suffering hardships. Its not God being unfair, its his proving we are his children, and he wants us to be the best we can be, just as the gym trainer will create “suffering” to build muscles.

Hebrews 12:1-12. *“1. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

9. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Feel that love of God for you in the pain and hurt of the testing situation, and trust Him for the answer to it all, even if it is in heaven that such comfort is finally received and understood. As we age, we often feel the Lord's "sand-papering" of our life as he seeks to polish away the imperfections before we end this pilgrimage. Such "chiselling" or "sanding" may be very uncomfortable indeed, but if the Lord does it to us, lets square our shoulders and bring it to Him alone and seek his reasons.

Romans 8:36-39, "36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Our response to pressures in the context of our short journey through space-time is to be in our worship with excitement as we focus forward on a humble acceptance of all that is on the Lord's path for us. Remember that the context we are serving in is far bigger than we can comprehend and the decision making required must be Holy Spirit directed or we are going to make some seriously bad decisions. We are on the way to heaven and each step needs to have the heavenly perspective to keep us focused forward. The two old prophet's words below have guided me through some recent very tough years.

Isaiah 55:6-11. "6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Jeremiah 10:23-24. "23. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."

Jeremiah 45:5, "5. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."

What is our daily response then as we plod forward through the testing circumstances that are often part of getting older? “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” sums it up for me and Matthew’s record of the Sermon on the Mount encourages me.

Matthew 6:31-34, “31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*
32. *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)* for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

Matthew 6:6-13. “6. *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*
7. *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*
8. *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*
9. *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*
10. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*
11. *Give us this day our daily bread.*
12. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
13. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

We say, “Our Father who art in heaven...”, and we are there speaking directly to our heavenly Father; we are positionally in heaven as we speak. **Hebrews 12:1-2** reminds us (as we saw above) that we are being watched in our spiritual work by all our godly ancestors and friends who have passed into heaven. We are presently still “in the arena”, as we saw in our introduction, and all who have gone before us are keenly watching our Holy Spirit filled work and worship and cheering us on from the stands of heaven. Old age gives us the opportunity to show that we were not just “one race ponies” worn out at 40! It is easy to win victories in health and strength, but older age gives us the opportunity by Holy Spirit power alone through prayer to win victory over fear, debility, and death itself.

Our challenge – to “run with endurance” knowing we are cheered on by all our saved ancestors and friends who have gone before us to heaven. How close is heaven? In light of all passages on prayer and especially **Hebrews 12:1-3**, I believe the modern physics concept of a “parallel universe” may be a useful image to have in mind. There is no “image” that is completely accurate for we are dealing with a different dimension totally, but heaven is a breath away, and our loved ones who have gone on are able to see us and cheer us on.

There is challenge and comfort in this. “*Oh my soul, march on with strength*”, **Judges 5:21**. As Nehemiah said, “*Do not sorrow, for the Joy of the Lord is your strength*”. **Nehemiah 8:10**.

What is the greatest challenge and encouragement that we can have in this life? I believe it is to be secure in the doctrines of the Word of God and know that the Plan of God is absolutely stable, and we are in this life and forever, “built upon the Rock that is Christ”. His plan calls for our exercise and spiritual growth down here on the earth in “Phase 1 (Salvation) and Phase 2 (Sanctification), before Phase 3 (Glorification) and our entry into heaven.

It is all a natural flow because we are living within his plan for our lives and anything Satan and his defeated crew can do is permitted for our spiritual growth that we might win eternal rewards (BTB doctrine below).

Hebrews 11:13-14, 13:13-14. *“13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.
14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
13:13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.
14. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”*

A Case Study – Paul’s Words to Titus

Paul encourages his son in the faith Titus to appoint the best older people to the eldership roles for the leadership of the local Cretan churches. The characteristics he directs Titus to seek are those we all need to cultivate as we get older. Let us note the specific Greek words Paul uses for they directly challenge us.

Titus 2:1-5. *“1. But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:
2. That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.
3. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;”*

KEY WORDS

Speak	Laleo	(Present active imperative) an order to keeping on speaking aloud.
Sound	ugiaino	(Present active participle) that which keeps on being healthy and good for the growth of the body and soul.
Aged	Presbuteros	Same word for "Elder", used of both man and woman (verse 3). At fifty in the ancient world one entered this category and a lot was expected of all who were "aged" by way of teaching the young and government/justice in the state.
Sober	Nephalos	Restraint in control of desires so that the person is under moral control.
Grave	Semnos	Behaving always with dignity, so that what he says and does is taken by the church and the world seriously.
Temperate	Sophronos	Sound of mind, without any temptation to gossip, or mental attitude sins that would defile the church.
Patience	Upomone	Steadfast endurance under pressure.
Behaviour	Katastole	Behaviour, words, manner of living.
Holiness	Ieroprepes	Behaviour and mental attitude of a priestess serving in the temple.
Accusers	Diabolos	Not slanderers of others character.
Given to	Dedoulomai	(Perfect passive participle) not being enslaved to (wine) or anything that interferes with their service to the Lord = fatal.
Teachers	Kalodidaskalos	Teachers of good(intrinsic value) things, not formally in a school but in daily life by word and deed.

Note the similarity of the list of traits for all older Christian men and women to those required of the pastor in **1 Timothy 3:1-14**. All older believers should be mature and spiritually qualified

for office, even if they are not specifically called to it. We should be spiritually ready for a call to serve, fully armoured and Holy Spirit filled, fit to serve. Are we "ready"?

Verse 1. The health of the church is not seen in it's youth group, although that is where all too often the emphasis and funding/budget is placed. The true health of the church is based in the older praying believers who are truly mature in their living faith-walk in the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as just being mature in years. It is the prayer-warrior heart of the church that determines its impact finally in the local area, and the prayer-heart of the church is built up by the pastor teaching sound doctrine regularly.

As Paul has already made clear in 1 Timothy 5, the praying widows of the church are the spiritual "powerhouse" of the church; if the older people pray with focus and power and witness where they can, then the youth will be empowered to do the things that they should do. But if the older people do not pray, and do not keep growing spiritually then the church is truly dead, and it will be a dangerous place.

Revival begins when the mature believers get their hearts in the right place and heed God's Word, feed upon it, honour it, obey it applying it into daily life, and then pray and witness in accord with its instructions. Titus has got to silence the false teachers, and the best way is always to simply be regularly preaching the truth, and so in this chapter Paul puts the false teachers aside and concentrates upon the people from whom the churches leadership should come. Titus is however to keep on speaking aloud true doctrine to counterbalance and eliminate the false teaching that the heretics are preaching.

Paul's word for "sound" is the same one he used in chapter one verse thirteen. Hugiaino is a verb which indicates health, growth, strength, nourishment, and productivity in the person's spiritual life. Titus is to systematically teach the truths of God's Word with this effect in mind. Any teaching of the Word of God that does not have this effect on the hearers has not been bone fide Biblical Teaching!

There are some basic principles that flow from this command in verse 1:

THE PASTOR'S PURPOSE

1. Systematic Bible teaching that has a positive growth emphasis is what is required for spiritual growth. It is however only half the equation, the other half being the believer's faith response (Hebrews 4:1-12), but for all who would be pastor teachers it is our half of the equation!
2. The Pastor must have authority to teach and be backed up by the Eldership who by their support identify that the Bible and its teaching is important.
3. God has ordained that believers grow in association with others under a called and trained Pastor. We are to meditate on the Word alone (Matthew 6:6, 1 Timothy 4:15) but this must begin with hearing it from a man who has God's call upon him. There are to be no "solitary" Christians trying to grow alone separated from the body of believers the church. Hebrews 10:24-25.
4. Unless we learn the Word of God we will not grow spiritually. 1 Peter 3:18.
5. Believers will recognize false teaching only because they have heard good and sound teaching and build up discernment. It is the pastor's job to teach soundly and often so that the Lord's flock learns the discernment necessary to survive the deception of the devil. Romans 16:17, 2 Timothy 3:14, 15, 2 John 7, 2 Peter 2:1-3.

6. When churches got into false teaching Paul would always say, "that isn't what you were taught", and every pastor must be able to do this also if people get into error. We cannot say this unless we have been systematically teaching. Ephesians 4:20, 21, Romans 16:17, Philippians 4:9, Galatians 1:1-12.
7. The teacher's words and his life must tie together to be an example for all to follow. Philippians 3:13-20, 4:9, Matthew 7:15 - 20.
8. The Lord's command through Paul is that we study the Word of God. 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17.
9. The Lord will always provide each godly church the right pastor to teach the Word. Ephesians 4:11- 16.

Verse 2. When we look at the characteristics of the older Christian man that Paul gives Titus, let us think about the activities and character of the older Christian men we know, and let's compare believers and unbelievers, and let's challenge ourselves to be like this to the glory of God, for we stand in the presence of the enemy at all times and he seeks to insult and abuse. It is important that we see that the apostolic standard remains just that, God's standard for all church history.

THE OLDER CHRISTIAN MAN – our Standard to meet as God's men...

1. "Sober". - Christian men should be temperate in their use of alcoholic drinks, but its much more than just this. The tragedy of our day is that many older men have no other interests except to sit around watch sports and drink or use prescription medication to tranquilize their minds. No believer should ever be like this; we have much more exciting things to do in our service for the Lord. We are to keep serving him in whatever way we can until we die. There is no retirement in front of the TV or in the local pub for us, if we are truly serving him. Pour your self out in service – don't ooze out onto the coach!
2. "Grave". - Behaving always with a dignity that earns respect and a hearing from the unbelievers. All too often the older men of a community behave in a manner that earns disgust or pity; this shouldn't happen with the older Christian men.
3. "Temperate". - The wisdom that comes with walking in the Lord's will over the years will produce this Christian virtue. Sadly, many are as spiritually foolish at 70 as we were at 20. Paul demands that the teaching of Titus give no excuse for such things to occur. Doctrine applied in the life daily will always help men to avoid mental attitude sins and will over time produce this stable and calming character trait.
4. "Sound in faith". - That word for soundness crops up again here; Paul is underlining his point isn't he? Spiritual health and robustness is essential as our bodies wear out and our physical energy declines. A truly "robust" faith is what is required for the older man.

A faith that can handle suffering, shortages of money and of breath, persecution for their faith, and finally death itself. Anything short of this is not good enough. Anything short of this is dangerous as we enter our last years.

5. "Sound in charity". - It is all very well to be sound/healthy in ourselves, but what about those in need around us? A truly robust faith will have concern for others at its heart. Love is seen in action within the church as other believers are cared for when they need help.

6. "Sound in endurance". - The word for endurance is the great Greek word *hupomone*, a military word meaning steadfast endurance under pressure. It was a word used to describe the steadfast courage of a military unit that has been under attack for many hours and still stands its ground not giving in to the enemy. Bible teaching should encourage believers to be stable and courageous in the adversities or tests of life, depending on God's Word, and trusting in it so that the realities of God's promises are stronger than the realities of pressures.

Verse 3. The older women are also to be encouraged by the pastor's ministry and the results in their lives are to be the same as the men, but there are other characteristics that the women should have above and beyond the men. When we look at this and the men's list remember that these are the characteristics that will open doors for evangelism for the older members of the church amongst their peers, and amongst the younger people who are looking for hope from the old.

The pagan temples had standards for their priestesses, and the older Christian women must be superior to these standards to have any witness in their pagan cities. Keep these words in their context – there were many “sexually liberated women” in these days – they were the prostitutes of Diana! As believer-priests of the Lord of Glory we are to be superior in all things to our pagan neighbours. **1 Peter 2:5, 9, Revelation 1:16, 5:10.**

THE OLDER CHRISTIAN WOMAN – the Standard to meet Ladies...

1. "Behaviour as becometh holiness". - Holiness is the state of separation from worldliness for the service of God, in such a state of mind and body as to be acceptable to God. The word used here is the one used to describe the character of the priestess who served in the Temples of the pagan gods. Our standards must be superior to the world, or we have no witness in the world.
2. "Not false accusers". - Gossip and slander was, and is, the killer of witness for men and women, but older women in the ancient world had more temptations to it in their social circles. The Christian woman had to stand apart from it. Mental attitude sins like gossip are particularly attacked as evils in the Word of God. **Proverbs 6:17, 15:2, 12:18, 19, James 1:26, 3: 3-8.**
3. "Not given to (perfect tense – with eternal and fatal results if entered into) much wine". - Alcoholism was a major problem for the older women of the ancient world and with tranquilizers it continues to be a problem today as people have little to keep them active and involved in life and become spectators who drink on life's sidelines. A mature Christian woman has the Bible doctrine to not only feel useful in God's plan but to be active in the plan. Whether it is in prayer, teaching other women, or encouragement the older women of the church are to be active in ministry never passive drinkers of alcohol. It is slavery to alcohol/drugs that is in view here; neither the men or the women are required not to drink, but if they chose to they must be in charge, they must never be controlled by the drink. The same applies to any medication. Lazy doctors will prescribe drugs that should be short term help but are long term addictive – this is not to be our path.
4. "Teachers of good things". - The older women were to fulfill their role as examples for the younger and to teach them and others of their own age all that will build godliness, and goodness of character. The woman's group in the church is to be a school of doctrine and encouragement where godly women share truths from the Word that can strengthen others.

The older men and women have a key role in the church, and where they have grown spiritually and are living witnesses to the power of Christ there is a stable base in the church for its work within the community.

All believers must test themselves against the standards set out here. Are we growing so that these things will be true of us in our older years. Are they true for us now at the age we find ourselves at presently? Ministry in the future is built upon the things we do today; our daily spiritual practices will set us up for growth or for decline, for there is no middle ground.

As life moves on, we face increasing tests and challenges to our faith (health decline, job problems, and often shortages of money), and if we have not grown, we will fail these "ordinary" tests let alone any special ones. The Lord is restricted in what he can get us to do for Him if we haven't grown up spiritually, as we will not be able to take the special pressures that are associated with most special and demanding service.

Are we fulfilling our responsibility as Pastors by systematically teaching the Word of the Lord; by making the doctrines of the Word clear for all to hear. Do we teach systematically and accurately from the Bible and is the result in accordance with the standard demanded of us from these verses. Are the people growing? Is there spiritual soundness and health in their lives, families and daily work?

Two ladies in their eighties in my church told me that they had learned more in eighteen months of my weekly Bible study than they had learned in their entire Christian lives over 60+ years! What eternal shame to those ministers who had never taken these lady's hunger for the Word seriously! What judgment there is for lazy pastors who have not fed the hungry older sheep? The Lord was clear to Peter in John 21, that both the lambs and older sheep are to be protected and fed! As we get older its critical for pastors to teach more and as we are maturing, we ought to be able to lift our game significantly as we age.

The Purpose For The Pastor Being There in the Local Church!

The four-fold purpose behind the gift of pastor teacher is spelt out in **Ephesians 4:11-16**.

1. "For the perfecting of the saints". - That is, that all believers under their care might move towards "completeness"; that they might all grow to the point where God can use them as his adult servants in the world.
2. "For the work of the ministry". - The "work" of ministry means the care for the flock in all practical things required that there might be growth and strength in the local church.
3. "For the building of the Body of Christ". - The work of ministry means that the church members do not grow as individuals only but also as a body together in love and service the each to the other. The church must grow in numbers but also there should be growth of a "community" that truly loves one another.
4. "That all believers might grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ". All accurate Bible teaching will have as its result and goal that the believer might be Christ like. He is our standard and becoming more like him should be our daily goal.

We must remember why we are called to preach and teach the Word of God. We are called in order that the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word, might transform the lives of God's people.

If there is no change in the people it may be that we are getting in the way of the work of the Holy Spirit by not being accurate or systematic in our teaching, or are not being faithful in our

walk, and are thereby undermining our message. The call is clear, we are to teach in such a way as Paul commands or we are under God's discipline. God wants transformed people.

Paraphrase of Verses 1-3

"But you (pastor) keep on speaking aloud the principles that stand out as true and health giving doctrine which are able to build believers up. Do this in order that the older men might be sound of mind and character, sound in their faith, strong in consistent caring for others, stable and able to endure under pressure. The older women should have the same character as the older men, but also they need to be superior in behaviour to the pagan priestesses as is right given their position, not gossips, not enslaved to alcohol, but rather teachers of all good things."

Reflect on the following passages that flow from our previous book on Heaven.

Job 1:21-22. "21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Job 13:13-16. "13. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will.

14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand?

15. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

16. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him."

Job 14:14-16. "14. If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

15. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

16. For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin?"

Job 19:22-27. "22. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

23. Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!

24. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

25. For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

26. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

27. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

2 Peter 3:9-18. "9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?
13. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.
14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.
15. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;
16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.
17. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.
18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen”

- 2 Timothy 1:12,** “7. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
8. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;
9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,
10. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:
11. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.
12. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

- Jude 20-25.** “20. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,
21. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
22. And of some have compassion, making a difference:
23. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.
24. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
25. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

- John 8:51-53, 56-58.** “51. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.
52. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.
53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?
56. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.
57. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?
58. Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Acts 7:55-60. “54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

1 John 1:5-10. “5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

2 Timothy 4:6-8. “6. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

These godly authors of holy scripture are our brothers and our mentors. Let us relax into Jesus arms as they do here and trust our Saviour to carry us right through the challenges of older age into heaven's glory.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27. “24. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway/disqualified.”

“Doctrine of Rewards/Crowns” is below in the last section of this book.

12. DOCTRINAL BIBLE STUDIES FOR FOLLOW UP STUDY

Angels - Angelic Conflict

Angels - Satan's Destiny

Christian Life - Blessed in Heavenly Places in Christ

Christian Life - Deliverance

Christian Life - Destiny of the Believer

Christian Life - Eternal Life

Christian Life - Eternal Security

Christian Life - Eternal Security and Peter's Denial

Christian Life - Eternal Security – Hebrew Chapter 6

Christian Life - Maturity – Cross to Crown

Christian Life - Mental Attitude of the Believer

Christian Life - Not of this World

Christian Life – Pilgrim

Christian life - Prayer

Christian Life - Rewards and Crowns

Christian Life - Royal Family of God

Christian Life – Walking and Living in the Light

Death

Dying Grace

Drinking Alcohol

Eternity Past/Eternity Future

Fear

Fullness of Time

God - Character of God

God - Divine Decrees

God - God Cares for You Believer

God – Plan of God

Good Works

Grace

Heaven and Hell

Holy Spirit - Filling

“I Am” – The Seven “I Ams” of John’s Gospel

Memories

Old Age

Redemption

Sin Unto Death

Time

World

Worldliness

Worries

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT

1. There is an “angelic conflict” and it is intimately related to our presence in this world.

2. ETERNITY PAST

[a] Initially God created angels. At creation we are told that there was unity as all the angels sang in unison.

[b] Satan as Lucifer with the title Son of the Morning was the head of the angels. **Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28:12-15**

[c] It is noted that the Lord Jesus Christ is now called Son of the Morning in **2 Peter 1** showing that the Lord replaced Satan as a result of His victory at the Cross.

3. FALL OF SATAN

[a] Satan became proud and attempted a coup d’etat against God in **Isaiah 14:12-17**

[b] When Satan fell he took one third of the angels with him. **Revelation 12:9.**

[c] The angels who exist forever therefore fall into two permanent groups:

(i) Elect Angels who remained faithful to God (**1 Timothy 5:21**)

(ii) Fallen angels who chose to follow Satan fall into two categories:

(1) Imprisoned ones who were made inoperative at the time of the Flood (**Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4**)

(2) Demons who are currently operative (**1 Corinthians 10:20,21, Mark 5:1-20**)

[d] There is therefore a spiritual warfare between elect and fallen angels, which affects the human race. (**Ephesians, 6:12, Revelation 12**)

4. SENTENCE ON THE FALLEN ANGELS

[a] In eternity past Satan and the fallen angels were judged and sentenced to the Lake of Fire - **Matthew 24:51**

[b] It would appear that Satan appealed against his sentence and said "how can a God of Love sentence any of his creatures to the lake of fire?"

[c] The answer is in the character of God who is HOLY as well as LOVE. His holiness can only judge sin and rebellion.

[d] The lake of fire therefore was not created for man. Man ends up in the lake of fire due to his own negative attitude towards God.

5. MANKIND’S ROLE IN THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

[a] This sentence which was given before man existed has not yet executed and will not be so until the end of the Millennium in **Revelation 20:10.**

[b] There must be a long lapse of time before the sentence is executed with this period being taken up with the whole of human history. Therefore the purpose of the existence of the human race and its relation to God can only be explained as a testimony to the angels.

[c] Through the creation of man God provides a clear legal witness to Satan and his angels of their sin. The whole of human history is to prove certain points to the angels. Things can happen in your life as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and these can only be explained as a testimony to the angels.

6. FALL OF MAN AND VICTORY OF THE GOD-MAN

[a] Man starts off lower than the angels. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus Christ made Himself a little lower than the angels.

[b] Although Adam failed to be victorious the Lord Jesus Christ replaces Adam in history and won the battle in His humanity. **1 Corinthians 15:22** tells us that in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive.

[c] A new form of creature judges come into existence and will judge the angels **1 Corinthians 6:1-3**

7. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ANGELS AND MAN

[a] Angels and mankind have a number of parallels with human free will being tested in exactly the same way as angelic free will.

[b] Angels began in innocence and full obedience to God (**Job 38:7 Ezekiel 28:14-15**)

Man began in innocence (**Genesis 2:25**)

Angels sinned - rebellion of Satan (**Isaiah 14:12-14**)

Man sinned - rebellion of Adam (**Genesis 3:1-7**)

Angels are divided into two categories - elect or fallen.

Man is divided into two categories - believers and unbelievers. (**John 3:36**)

8. ADAM AND FREEWILL

[a] God created Adam and Eve, to show Satan that mankind, created lower than angels (**Hebrews 2:6-7**), would choose to obey God. Mankind therefore, by a choice of freewill, would decide whether to obey God and be blessed, or to disobey God and be judged (the same choice that Satan had).

[b] A test was instituted for man's freewill - obedience to God or disobedience. (**Genesis 2:16-17**). Adam - and therefore all mankind - sinned and thereby rebelled against God. All of mankind, therefore, is in the same condition of sinful rebellion as Satan.

[c] However, God instituted another test of freewill for mankind - will they choose to return to God through Jesus Christ, or will they choose to continue in sin and rebellion (**John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9**).

[d] Anyone who chooses to return to God will be saved; anyone who chooses to remain in rebellion to God will be judged in the lake of fire, the same fate as Satan (**Matthew 25:41**)

[e] Therefore, by the work of Christ on the cross, and man's freewill faith in Christ, God has vindicated His love to save and His justice to judge.

9. RESOLUTION OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

Stage 1 - **Salvation** - by faith, man is saved and made positionally superior to angels (**Hebrews 2:6-7**)

Stage 2 - **Christian Walk/Sanctification** - by faith, the believer overcomes Satan (**Ephesians 6:10-17**)

Stage 3 - **Eternity/Ultimate Sanctification** - in Christ, the believer will judge Satan and his fallen angels (**Hebrews 2:8, 1 Corinthians 6:3**)

10. THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Angels watch the human race. (**1 Corinthians 4:9, Ephesians 3:10, 1 Timothy 5:21, 1 Peter 1:12**) Elect angels rejoice every time someone is saved (**Luke 15:10**)

11. THREE BASIC QUESTIONS

The angelic conflict answers three basic questions:-

[a] Why man? Inside man is a soul with mentality and freewill which when linked together resolves the angelic conflict, (**Colossians 2:14-15, Hebrews 2**). The cross is the real victory in the angelic conflict.

[b] Why sin? Sin resolves stage 1 of the plan of God (see paragraph 9). At the cross sin was judged and the barrier between man and God was removed so that man's relationship with God depends on his free will.

Every time a person accepts Christ, elect angels rejoice. In the garden man was innocent and all he had to do was stay away from one tree. Now man is guilty he has to come to a tree (the cross). (**Genesis 2:17, 1 Peter 2:24**).

[c] Why suffering? Suffering resolves the issue in Stage 2. Suffering involves the promise principle. (**1 Peter 1:7-8, Romans 5:2-4, 1 Corinthians 4:11-16, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:224-26, James 5:10.**). Suffering is designed for blessing and is a further blow to Satan. It is to demonstrate the love of God in a way that cannot be done in eternity as in eternity there is no more sorrow, pain or death. (**Revelation 21:4**)

12. STAGES IN THE CONFLICT [SEE SATANIC ATTACK ON THE PLAN OF GOD]

[a] From the fall of man to the ascension of Christ the line of Christ and Jesus Christ himself were the target of attack. Once the ascension was a fact in history Satan was unable to attack the line of the Saviour.

[b] The resurrection, ascension and session of the Lord Jesus Christ caused intensification in the angelic conflict.

[c] Once Christ is glorified at the right hand of the Father the angelic conflict becomes intensified in the Church age.

[d] Every Church Age believer is now a target and because of this every believer has had special provisions made for him:

- (i) Indwelling of the Holy Spirit (**John 14:17**)
- (ii) Indwelling of Jesus Christ (**John 14:23**)
- (iii) Completed canon of Scripture (**1 Corinthians 13:10**)

13. PROGRESSION TO THE LAKE OF FIRE

This explains the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ from the time he sat down at the right hand of the Father until the Last Judgement. **Psalms 110:1** says, "The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [God the Son], Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

[a] The first stage – Insurgency warfare – Pentecost - Rapture

During this time, He calls out the personnel who will replace the angelic council members who have been condemned **1 Corinthians 4:8, 6:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 3:21**

The angelic council comprises God and all the angels as seen in **1 Kings 22:19-23 and 2 Chronicles 18:18-23**

[b] The second Stage – Rapture to Second Advent - Confrontation

During this time the new members of the angelic council are evaluated in relation to their divine and human good, rewarded [**1 Corinthians 3:11-15**], they lose their old sin nature and have a resurrection body. The rebellious members, Satan and his followers are cast out of heaven **Revelation 12:4**

[c] The third stage – Second Advent – Victory Stage

Christ casts Satan and the fallen angels into hell for a thousand years and rightfully asserts His authority.

[d] The fourth stage – The Last Judgement. The Lake of Fire was created for Satan and his angels **Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:4-15**.

Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire with the demons and the unbelievers. Unbelievers join them in the Lake of Fire because they have not accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The old creation is destroyed and a new heavens and a new earth provided by God. At that point all knees shall bow and the promise of making His enemies His footstool will have been fulfilled.

14. THE BELIEVERS AND RESULT OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

The result of the angelic conflict:

Stage 1 - Salvation - saved mankind is positionally superior to angels;

Stage 2 – Sanctification - Christian Walk - through suffering the believer develops his faith towards Christ to such an extent that he thereby shows the fallen angels the certainty of their doom;

Stage 3 - Heaven - In eternity the believer in his resurrection body will be physically superior to angels.

15. CONCLUSION

Through the fall of man Satan obtained control of the world though not necessarily control of mankind.

What makes it possible for man to live in the Devil's world and not be under his control? - Free will.

By using The Word of God in the filling of the Holy Spirit you can make decisions that are completely against Satan and all his "worldliness" falsehoods/concepts.

Satan is the ruler of this world. (**2 Corinthians 4:4, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2**) However we have the Bible - the mind of Christ (**1 Corinthians 2:16**).

We should know it and use it and thereby live victorious in God's power in the midst of troubles.

ANGELS – SATAN'S DESTINY

1. Satan is called a "prince" indicating that he had his own power and followers. (**John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:4**)

2. Yet he is still a creature, and is still ultimately subject to God (**Job 1:12**)

3. At the Cross, Christ defeated Satan, as his main power was through sin and death. (**John 12:27-32, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:54-56, Colossians 2:14-15, Hebrews 2:14-15**).

4. God purpose with the world is not yet complete - therefore the enforcement of Satan's defeat will not take place until the end of the Millennium (**Hebrews 1:13, Revelation 20:10**)

5. Satan's final judgement is sure:-

a) When he fell he was condemned, this was well before Mankind. (**Genesis 1:2**).

b) In the garden the certainty of God's judgement was announced. (**Genesis 3:15**)

c) The Cross was his final defeat, but final sentencing is not yet. (**John 12:31, Colossians 2:14-15**)

d) In the midst of the Great Tribulation his access to heaven will be stopped. He will no longer be able to slander believers. (**Revelation 12:7-12**)

e) At the Second Advent he is arrested and bound. (**Revelation 20:1-3**)

f) After the Millennium he is briefly released to lead the last great rebellion against God, sifting the volition of the Millennial people, and is finally cast into the Lake of Fire. (**Revelation 20:10**)

g) There are therefore four falls of Satan:-

i) from his place in eternity past to the earth with access to heaven.

ii) then that access is denied causing him to be restricted to the Earth.

iii) he is then contained in Hades for a thousand years.

iv) then his final fall into the Lake of Fire.

6. Satan has six abodes in his journey from the throne room of God to the Lake of Fire.

a) The Throne of God - **Ezekiel 28:12**

b) The Mineral Garden of Eden - **Ezekiel 28:13**

c) The Atmospheric Heavens - **Ephesians 2:2, 6:12**

d) The Earth - **Revelation 12:7-12**

e) The Abyss - **Revelation 20:1-3**

f) The Lake of Fire - **Revelation 20:7-10**. His doom is settled and sure – don't give him power now over your life by heeding any distraction or deception his team may try to use to stop you being Holy Spirit filled every day! Armour on and stand against him.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – BLESSED IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST

1. Believers are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**).

2. The same Greek word is used in (**John 3:12**) where the word 'things' is mentioned.

3. The heavenlies is the area of the believer's spiritual experience as identified with Christ in various ways:-

a) Divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**)

b) Life (**Colossians 3:4; 1 John 5:12**)

c) Relationships (**John 20:17; Hebrews 2:11**)

d) Inheritance (**Romans 6:16,17**)

e) Service (**John 17:18; Matthew 28:20**)

f) Suffering (**Philippians 1:29; 3:10; Colossians 1:24**)

g) Future glory (**Romans 8:18-21; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10**).

4. The believer is a heavenly man and a stranger or pilgrim on the earth. (**Hebrews 3:1,1 Peter 2:11**).

5. The believer is an ambassador from Heaven to the Earth. (**2 Corinthians 5:20**).

CHRISTIAN LIFE - DELIVERANCE

1. We are delivered from spiritual darkness. **Colossians 1:13**

2. We are delivered from sin. **2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 6:7**

3. We are delivered from death. **Hebrews 2:14**

4. We are delivered from judgement. **Romans 8:1**

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DESTINY OF BELIEVERS

1. All who believe in Jesus Christ has eternal life now (**1 John 5:11-13**). We will never die (**John 11:25,26, John 8:51**) but we will be with Him, seeing him at death not any scary "death" figure.

2. Believers are said to "fall asleep" at their death (**1 Thessalonians 4:14**). The soul departs to be consciously present with Christ, but the body "sleeps" in the grave until the resurrection (**2 Corinthians 5:6-8**).
3. When Christ comes at the Rapture, the bodies of those in Christ shall be raised from the dead (**1 Thessalonians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23**) and the death in Christ precede the living.
4. Our physical bodies will be replaced by immortal bodies (**2 Corinthians 5:1-4**) - conformed to the body of Christ (**Philippians 3:20-21**).
5. We shall be like him (**1 John 3:2**) seeing His glory and reflecting it in ourselves (**Colossians 3:4, John 17:22**).
6. We will be rewarded because of works of faith (**Luke 19:12-19**) which will vary in proportion to our faithfulness in serving God (**Matthew 6:20, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15**) in our called path.
7. In the Millennial Kingdom, we may possibly reign with Christ on earth as priests of God and Christ (Revelation 20:6), or we may just be at the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" (**Rev 19:7-10**). We will "take our orders" from the Lord at that time.
8. To the overcomer (**1 John 5:4-5**) Christ will give to eat of the tree of life (**Revelation 2:7**) and shall not be hurt by the second death - the lake of fire (**Revelation 2:11**). He will be given authority to rule over nations (**Revelation 2:26-27**) Jesus will acknowledge the believer before God (**Revelation 3:4-5**) who will be made a pillar in the temple of God. (**Revelation 3:12**) and will be seated with Christ in His own throne. (**Revelation 3:21**)
9. God will wipe away all tears from his eyes; sorrow, crying, pain, and death shall be no more (**Revelation 21:4**) – any "losses" of earth's journey will be well made up for by the Lord directly to us then.
10. We shall know all things perfectly (**1 Corinthians 13:12**) and may be able to explore any topic we have ever had interest in on the earth and more....much more.
11. We will receive an incorruptible inheritance. (**1 Peter 1:3-5**) kept by our all powerful God in heaven. This is a matter of God's Promise, not man's speculations and wishful thinking.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL LIFE

1. DEFINITION: Life belonging to the ages (Greek word aionios). This is the life of the believer who had a beginning in time but whose life will continue through the other side of death into the infinite future.
2. Mankind were created for eternity. God's purpose was to create a being to enjoy fellowship with forever. **2 Peter 3: 9**.
3. The issue for entry into eternal life is faith in Christ. The choice for man is clearly stated in **John 3:36, 5:24, Acts 13:46, Galatians 6:8, Matthew 25:6**.
4. Those who are serious about life and concerned about death ask about it. **Matthew 13:40-43, 19:16, Mark 10:17, Luke 10:25, 18:18**.

5. The Lord's words provide the answer to the questions about eternal life. **John 6:68, Romans 5:20, 21, Romans 6:22, 23.** It is the Lord who gives eternal life, **John 5:39, 40, 12:50.**

6. The Lord gives eternal life to those who believe on him, **John 10:28, 17:2.** The door to fellowship and all that goes with it is opened by faith in him as Saviour. **John 3:15,16, Acts 13:48, John 6:40, 47.**

“To Eat His Flesh and Drink His Blood” is graphic language to picture his work and our need to appropriate it for ourselves. **John 6:54, 4:14.**

7. While it may only be fully known in heaven the believer may grasp a glimpse of eternal life here and now by way of anticipation and relationship. Knowing God is a glimpse of eternal life now, **John 17:3,** and fellowship with him is the joy of every believer now and forever. **1 John 1:1-4, 5:10-12, 20, 1 Timothy 6:12, 19.**

8. Eternal life is received in full at the resurrection/rapture when we all receive our new bodies from the Lord. Rewards are received then to enjoy with the Lord forever. We are all urged to live each day with the eternal life perspective in mind, thinking of our place with the Lord forever. **Matthew 19:29, 30, Mark 10:29-31, John 12:25, John 4:36, Romans 2:6,7.**

9. Eternal Life is the believers hope, associated with the Rapture and Resurrection, and should be on our mind through each day, as it sets us apart from the unbelievers who have no such hope. **Philippians 3:20, 21, Titus 1:2, 2:13, 3:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 4:13, 1 Peter 1:3,**

10. The assurance of eternal life is grounded in the promise of God given through Christ. **1 John 2:24,25, 1 John 5:13-15.**

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY

1. When a person truly trusts Jesus Christ for salvation, he is saved forever. He cannot lose his salvation.

2. POSITIONAL APPROACH (Romans 8:38-39)

We are united with Christ ("in Christ"). Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ.

3. LOGICAL APPROACH (Romans 8:32, Romans 5)

As unbelievers we are enemies of God (**Romans 5**), as believers we are his children. If he did the most for his enemies what will he do for his children? This excludes loss of salvation for he saved us while we were his enemies.

4. GOD'S HANDS APPROACH (John 10:28, Psalm 37:24)

Neither shall anyone seize them out of my hand. God is all powerful.

5. EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH (2 Timothy 2:12-13)

If we deny Christ He is going to deny us rewards (context=suffering and rewards). If we renounce Him, HE REMAINS FAITHFUL. The believer is in Christ and Christ indwells the believer. He cannot deny Himself.

6. THE FAMILY APPROACH (Galatians 3:26, John 1:12)

When you believe in Christ you are born again as a child of God. You cannot be unborn, once a child always a child.

7. THE INHERITANCE APPROACH (1 Peter 1:4-5)

We have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the power of God. Perfect tense - it will always be reserved, since it is kept by God, not us.

8. THE SOVEREIGNTY APPROACH (2 Peter 3:9, Jude 24)

He is not willing that any should perish - refers to the whole human race (2 Peter 3:9) Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling (from perishing). Once you are saved, it is His will that you don't perish.

9. THE BODY APPROACH (1 Corinthians 12:21, Colossians 1:18)

Christ is the head, we are the members of the body. If any are lost, the body of Christ is incomplete.

10. THE GREEK TENSE APPROACH (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"For by Grace are ye saved". Perfect tense of the verb "sozo". For by Grace have you been saved in the past so that you go on being saved forever.

11. THE SEALING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT APPROACH (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30)

In the ancient world the seal was a guarantee for protection. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit guarantees our security.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY AND PETER'S DENIAL

1. The denial of our Lord and resultant fall of Peter indicates the eternal security of the believer
2. Unlike Judas Peter survived his great betrayal of our Lord and after recovery had a great ministry for thirty or so years. The recovery had a number of features.

[a] Peter was saved when this incident happened.

[b] Peter did not lose his salvation by his action.

[c] Peter was disciplined as a child of God in the form of bitter regrets.

[d] Peter did confess his sins [John 21:15-17]. Confession is essential regarding recovery in ministry.

[e] If Peter had died immediately after his denials he still would have gone to Paradise

[f] Confession of sins gives you the privilege of service in the Christian life. Peter is going to have a great ministry ahead.

[g] Peter failed but he was still alive and therefore God had a plan and purpose for him.

3. You know when your ministry is finished, as you die or are taken at the Rapture. If you are not "face to face" in ministry, you will be "face to face" with the Lord!

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ETERNAL SECURITY – HEBREWS CHAPTER 6**1. SCRIPTURE**

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, and the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgement. And this we will do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame..."

2. APPARENT PROBLEM

Are these people believers, and if they are, can a believer lose his salvation?

3. EVALUATION

a) In Hebrews chapter 5 verses 1 To 10 the writer of the book to the Hebrews has been teaching them the advanced doctrine of the High Priesthood of Christ and his comparison with Melchizedek.

b) In **Hebrews 5:11** the writer of Hebrews breaks off this theme telling his readers "they are dull of hearing".

c) Further in verses 12-14 of chapter 5 he chides them for not growing up "they need milk (like babies) and not meat (like adults)" v12, milk is for those unskilled in the scriptures v13, whilst meat is for the mature v.14

d) In fact **Hebrews 6:9** and following continues to encourage them to get back on the right track. In **Hebrews 6:9** they are called "beloved" - a term for believers.

e) In Hebrews chapter 7 the writer of Hebrews returns to his dissertation on Melchizedek.

f) **Hebrews 5:11 to 6:19** can be seen as a passage in parenthesis, a scriptural aside to chasten his Jewish readers who are within 3 years of 70 AD at which time the Jews will go unto dispersion.

4. GRAMMAR Hebrews 6:1-6 Two points of syntax.

a) In the Greek language when a list is given, rather than repeating the list again the first item of the list is repeated to indicate that the list is to be repeated c.f. "repentance" and v.1 and v.6

b) The action of the participle in the Greek language always precedes the action of the main verb.

c) The layout of v.1-6 is:- a list of 6 basic doctrines followed by 5 participles followed by the first doctrine portraying the list again with the main verb - "impossible to renew" "impossible to renew" - is made up of a noun being used as a verb which in the Greek gives tremendous emphasis to the verb - it can be translated "totally impossible to renew".

5. THE BASIC DOCTRINE LIST v. 1-4

Therefore leaving the basic doctrines let us go on to perfection (maturity) not going back to the basics.

- a) Repentance from good works (human good)
- b) Faith towards God (trusting in the promises)

- c) Doctrine of Baptisms (outward witness)
- d) Laying on of hands (commissioning)
- e) Resurrection of the dead (eventual resurrection)
- f) Eternal judgement (the fate of the unbeliever)

REPENTANCE in verse 6 is used as the key word for the list of 6 basic doctrines.

6. THE FIVE PARTICIPLES v. 4-6 The action of the participles precede the action of "impossible to renew".

a) Who were once enlightened - AORIST PASSIVE participle of PHOTIZO. Here the passive voice shows that the subject (the person) received enlightenment. The aorist tense shows the point of time when the believer knew some doctrine. They received knowledge through bible teaching.

b) "and have tasted of the heavenly gift" - AORIST MIDDLE participle of GEUOMA1 This is the same verb and same morphology as in Hebrews 2:9 where "Christ tasted death for all men." Aorist tense point of salvation, middle voice of benefit to us tasting salvation - believing in Christ.

c) "and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit" -AORIST PASSIVE participle of GINOMAI - "to become" this phrase becomes "and became at a point of time partakers of the Holy Spirit" - this refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation. "partaker" means partner or sharer.

d) "and have tasted the good word of God" - AORIST MIDDLE participle of GEUOMAI - this draws together every time a person learns the word of God. "and the powers of the world to come" deals with their experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the start of the church age.

e) "if they shall fall away " - AORIST ACTIVE participle of PARAPIPTO - literally having fallen away. PARA - immediate source, PIPTO - to fall. The person who falls away does so of his own free will. Active voice - the person does the action.

7. MAIN VERB

"it is impossible" - "it is" does not occur in the original. "Impossible" is a noun instead of a verb which gives it double emphasis. Literal translation - Impossible, totally impossible. (v.4)

"to renew again" - present active infinitive - renew or restore to fellowship. (v.6)

Looking at the participles these people:-

were once enlightened - they are saved tasted the heavenly gift - they are saved partakers of the Holy Spirit - they are saved tasted the good word of God - they are saved

But these things have been debased by the fifth participle - "shall fall away"

"unto repentance" - with reference to repentance, the first word in the list of basic doctrines.

"seeing" - does not occur in the original and represents two participles which literally translated mean "so long as".

"they crucify to themselves" - how? - by offering animal sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem.

"and put him to an open shame this means from the source of your own negative attitude you have shamed Christ.

In verse 7 the believer producing divine good (herbs) is shown whilst under the provision of God (rain off) this being contrasted with the believer in a carnal state producing human good (thorns and briers) in verse 8.

8. CONCLUSION

The people in **Hebrews 6:1-6** are habitually carnal believers who are unable to understand the basic doctrines they once knew let alone the advanced doctrines of the High Priesthood of Christ.

You cannot learn God's Word whilst carnal. Their negative attitude is constantly demonstrated by their offering of animal sacrifices in the temple. In v.9 the writer tells them "But beloved, we are persuaded of better things of you". They are urged to become spiritual again = **1 John 1:9**

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MATURITY – CROSS TO THE CROWN

1. Salvation is only the beginning of the plan for man. After salvation the believer's objective is to advance in stages of spiritual growth on the path from the Cross to the Crown.

2. At each stage the believer faces increasing intense tests that can only be passed by faith. Paul in **Romans 1:17** says believers progress from faith to faith. The five Hebrew words for faith illustrate the five stages of growth described in the New Testament.

a) The Babe - **1 Peter 2:2** - AMEN - the leaning faith of **Genesis 15:6**

All believers enter the family of God as infants when they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. After the tremendous stress of birth, of coming from darkness into the light the infant's impulse is to nurse. The objective is nourishment but the baby also receives great comfort in feeding. God's objective for the spiritual infant is for growth, but He commences this with comfort. Not much is expected of a baby in his first few years; he cannot feed or change himself. Spiritual infants are just as helpless and need a great deal of nurturing, encouragement and patient encouragement and patient instruction.

b) The Adolescent - **1 John 2:13-14** - BATAH - the wrestling faith of **Psalms 37:3**

Adolescents are young, strong and eager believers. This is the stage where people have grown to the point at which they understand some of the principles of truth and are beginning to apply them to their lives. But like most adolescents, they have the growing pains of arrogance and rebellion against authority; they are sometimes too eager to act on their own, and this often gets them into trouble. They have knowledge which they mistake for wisdom, but they lack the experience. Their tendency is to want to apply the truth to other people's lives. Adolescents may be troublesome, but at least they are not apathetic. They must be patiently trained and encouraged to channel their energies. No one makes it to maturity without passing through adolescence.

c) The Mature - **Hebrews 5:14, 6:1** - CHASAH - the confident faith that takes refuge in the Lord - **Psalms 57:1**

The mature believer is able to take meat, the advance doctrine of the Word. A believer who has arrived at spiritual maturity knows enough about the Bible to take responsibility for his own life. He knows how to apply the Word of God to himself so rather than airing all his problems he knows how to solve them. He is not ready to take on every one else's problems but he can take control of his own life. He understands that God has a plan for his life and sets about fulfilling that plan. He gives himself to training and discipline, exercising himself and building spiritual muscle.

d) The Hero of Faith - **Isaiah 53:12, Hebrews 11** - YACHAL - the healing faith of **Job 13:15**

Heroes of faith are men and women who have gone beyond maturity and have learned to fight the good fight. They have advanced beyond simply taking responsibility for their own lives to becoming responsible for the lives of other people. They are always willing to pick up fallen comrades, to treat their wounds, to encourage them and supply their needs. Heroes of the faith still make mistakes, they still fail but they always stand back up and go back into battle.

e) The Friend of God - **James 2:23-25** - QAWAH - the enduring faith of **Isaiah 40:31**

The highest of all possible achievements in life is to become a friend of God. Every believer has the potential and the assets necessary to reach this point, but very few Christians do.

It takes persistency and tenacity. The only people who make it this far are those who absolutely refuse to quit.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – MENTAL ATTITUDE

1. Definition: Attitude or Mental attitude is the state of mind where the mind is set on a course of action on the basis of the whole function and thinking of the soul.
2. Every believer faces the inner conflict of divine versus human viewpoint. These two attitudes are at war in humanity in human history from the time of the fall. (**Isaiah 55:7-9**)
3. We are commanded to have divine viewpoint in our souls not the viewpoint of Satan (worldliness). **2 Corinthians 1:7, 10:5**. (Via Doctrine in the Soul)
4. Attitude determines both the life and character of a person - what you think is what you are (**Proverbs 23:7**)
5. As Christians we are commanded to have our thinking in tune with the mind of Christ. Gods plan for our lives calls for a new attitude in our souls, a new viewpoint, without any human viewpoint or mental attitude sin (**1 Corinthians 2:16, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 Romans 12:2, Philippians 2:5, 2 Timothy 1:7**)
6. Fellowship within a church is based on believers all being in tune with what the Bible teaches. **Philippians 2:2**.
7. Knowledge of the Bible (the mind of Christ, **1 Corinthians 2:16**) and control by the Holy Spirit renews the mind of the believer, giving divine viewpoint. (**Romans 12:2**)
8. The right mental attitude produces joy (**Philippians 2:2**), confidence (**2 Corinthians 5:1,6,8**), stability (**Isaiah 26:3-4, Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2**), true giving (**2 Corinthians 9:7**), love (**1 Corinthians 13:5**)
9. Human viewpoint is called worldliness (Doctrine Below). (**Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2**)
10. Evil is what you think as you are following Satan's policy. **Matthew 9:4, Galatians 6:3**. Mental attitude sins produce self induced misery. (**Proverbs 15:13**)
11. Without clear thinking there is conflict in the mind of the believer. **Isaiah 55:6-9, James 1:7-8**.
12. True stability of Character comes only this way. **Philippians 4:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:2**.
13. Giving is a mental attitude. **2 Corinthians 9:7**. Love is a mental attitude. **1 Corinthians 13: Deuteronomy 6:5,10:12**.
14. Worldliness is a mental attitude: It is all non-grace thinking i.e. Anti Gods Plan, **Colossians 3:2**.
15. Confidence in service and living generally flows from having "Divine Viewpoint" which has other advantages such as follows.

[a] Stability in life - **James 1:8**

- [b] Prosperity of soul - **Philippians 4:7**
- [c] Giving to the Lord - **2 Corinthians 9:7**
- [d] Spiritual rather than worldly - **Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:2**
- [e] Purity rather than evil - **Matthew 9:4**
- [f] No arrogance - **Galatians 6:1-5.**
- [g] Inner beauty - **1 Timothy 2:9,10,15.**

CHRISTIAN LIFE – NOT OF THIS WORLD

1. The believer has a different position. (**1 Corinthians 15:22**). In Adam all die but in Christ shall all be made alive.
2. The believer has a different birth. (**John 3:5-7, Titus 3:5**). Natural generation versus regeneration. All are born into the world. Believers only are born again. This places one outside the framework of the devil's world.
3. The believer has a different service. The unbeliever serves his father the devil. (**John 8:44**) The believer serves Christ. (**John 13:16, 15:20**)
4. The believer has a different purpose. (**1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, Romans 15:6**). The unbeliever in the world system is seeking some form of self gratification. Believer is under the form of God glorification.
5. The believer has a different power. (**Galatians 5:16**). The energy of the flesh versus the power of the Spirit. The satanic doctrine versus the power of the Word of God.
6. Different way of life. (**Ephesians 4:22, 2:13**). The world's way of life is religion and legalism. The Christian way of life is supernatural.
7. A difference in destiny. (**John 3:36, 3:18**). The World is headed for the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The believer is headed for heaven.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PILGRIM

1. A pilgrim is a sojourner in a strange place; a stranger in a foreign country.
2. The believer is a pilgrim in this world as our real home country is a heavenly one (**John 15:19 Ephesians 2:19; 1 Peter 2:11**).
3. This is illustrated in the lives of the patriarchs (**Genesis 47:9; Exodus 6:4; Hebrews 11:8-10; 13-16**).
4. When the people of Israel were living in the promised land they were, from a spiritual point of view, still pilgrims (**Psalms 39:12; 119:54**).
5. So too are Christians, even when living in peace and prosperity under a Christian government (**Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:34**).

6. The life of a Christian is a pilgrimage. This theme is worked out in great detail in John Bunyan's well-known allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress".
7. Our heavenly home will not come gradually. The existing system will be destroyed and replaced by God Himself (**2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 3:12; 21:2,10**).

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRAYER

1. We may know the provision of God but we must communicate with Him in order to obtain this provision.

- a) Prayer is the believer's means of communicating with God.
- b) The Bible is God's way of communicating with man.

2. Promises Involving Prayer

- a) Matthew 21:22 We should ask believing.
- b) Matthew 18:19 The power of corporate prayer.
- c) Psalm 116:1, 2 God is always available to hear our prayer.
- d) Isaiah 65:24 God will answer while we are yet praying.
- e) Matthew 7:7 We are commanded to pray.
- f) John 14:13-14 We can ask for anything in His name.
- g) Philippians 4:6 The prayer should be with thanksgiving.
- h) 1 Thessalonians 5:17 We should pray without ceasing.
- i) Hebrews 4:16 We can come boldly to the throne of Grace.

3. Prayer Divided into 4 Segments

- a) Confession of sins (1 John 1:9)
- b) Thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- c) Intercession for others (Ephesians 6:18)
- d) Petitions for one's own needs (Hebrews 4:16)

4. Power of Prayer

- a) Individual - Elijah and the burnt offering (1 Kings 18:36-39)
- b) Corporate - the release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:1-18)

5. One Prayer that could not be Answered

The prayer of our Lord on the Cross (Psalm 22:1-18)

6. To Whom are Prayers Addressed?

- a) Directed to the Father - (Matthew 6:5-9)
 - b) In the name of the Son - (Hebrews 7:25)
 - c) In the power of the Spirit - (Romans 8:26-27)
- The Son (Jesus) and Spirit are interceding for us.

7. Prayers can be Divided into Petition and Desire

- a) Petition - What you ask God for (e.g. a new car).
- b) Desire - The desire behind the petition (e.g. happiness because you have a new car).

8. Four Possible Combinations

- a) Petition answered - Desire not answered. Psalm 106:15 - The quails of the Exodus generation. 1 Samuel 8:5 - A king to reign over Israel.
- b) Petition not answered - Desire answered. Genesis 18:23 - The preservation of Sodom. 2 Corinthians 12:7 - Removal of the thorn in Paul's side.

- c) Petition answered - Desire answered. 1 Kings 18:36-37 - Elijah requests fire for the offering. Luke 23:42 - The penitent thief's prayer. Type c) represents the perfect prayer.
- d) Petition not answered - Desire not answered. Type d) unanswered prayer has 8 main reasons which are shown in paragraph 9.

9. Reasons for Unanswered Prayer

- a) Lack of belief (Matthew 21:22)
- b) Selfishness (James 4:3)
- c) Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18)
- d) Lack of compassion (Proverbs 21:13)
- e) Pride and self righteousness (Job 35:12-13)
- f) Lack of filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18)
- g) Lack of obedience (1 John 3:22)
- h) Not in the Divine will (1 John 5:14)

Most of the reasons for unanswered prayer, is some form of sin in the life, which can be solved by confession of known sins as per paragraph 3 a) under the concept of 1John 1:9.

10. Intercessory Prayer

- a) This is one of the four factors in a prayer, which are:-
 - i) Confession of sins
 - ii) Thanksgiving
 - iii) Intercession
 - iv) Own needs.
- b) The power of intercessory prayer is taught in (1 Kings 18:42-46) the principle being found in (James 5:16-18)
- c) The power of prevailing prayer is shown in (Acts 12)
- d) The prayer for the unbeliever (Romans 10:1)
- e) Prayer for an unknown believer (Colossians 1:3-11)
- f) Prayer for the known believer (Ephesians 1:15-23)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS

1. Rewards and Salvation are carefully separated in the scriptures. Salvation is a free gift from God, rewards are for meritorious service in the power of the Spirit.

2. Salvation - a free gift to the lost (**Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23, John 4:10**) - an everlasting possession (John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47).

3. Rewards - to the saved who faithfully work for the Lord (**1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, Revelation 22:12**) - distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (**1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10**), which takes place after the Rapture of the Church (**Revelation 19:7,8**).

4. Rewards are often pictured in the form of crowns:-

- a) The incorruptible crown - for faithfulness in exercising self control. (**1 Corinthians 9:24-27**)
- b) The crown of glory - for faithfulness in suffering. (**1 Peter 5:4**)
- c) The crown of life - for faithfulness under trial. (**James 1:12, Revelation 2:10**)
- d) The crown of righteousness - for faithful testimony. (**2 Timothy 4:8**)
- e) The crown of rejoicing - for faithful service. (**1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Philippians 4:1**)

5. Rewards come after you have entered into the Plan of God through regeneration.
6. Rewards are based on the use of divine operating assets including the filling of the Holy Spirit.
7. You can lose rewards but never salvation. (**1 Corinthians 3:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:12,13**)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – ROYAL FAMILY OF GOD

1. Definition.

All believers of the Church Age belong to a unique system of royalty. **Revelation 1:6**. This royalty is based on spiritual principles of Bible doctrine. While regeneration has occurred in every generation since the beginning of time, it is only the believers of the Church Age who form this eternal nobility.

2. Basis of royalty in the Church Age.

- a.) The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the basis of royalty. **Acts 1:5; Romans 6:3,4**
- b.) No believer before or after the Church Age receives at salvation the baptism of the Holy Spirit; it is peculiar to this Age of history. **Colossians 1:25,26**
- c.) In every dispensation, the believer is regenerated by the Holy Spirit at the moment he believes in Christ; but in the Church Age the Holy Spirit also baptises the believer into the Body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:13**

3. Precedent for Royalty.

- a.) The order or battalion of Melchizedek provides both the pattern and precedent. **Hebrews 5:6,10**
- b.) However, Melchizedek acquired his royalty by becoming king of Salem, while Jesus Christ was born Royalty in the line of David. **Matthew 1**
- c.) Through the baptism of the Spirit, every believer is entered into union with Christ; hence, believers are known as the Body of Christ. **Colossians 1:18**
- d.) As a member of the Body of Christ, every believer of the Church Age is eternally and personally related to the King of kings. **Galatians 3:26-29**
- e.) When the Body of Christ is completed, the Church Age terminates with the resurrection or the Rapture, at which time the Body of Christ becomes the Bride of Christ. **Matthew 25:1-13; I Thessalonians 4:16-18**
- f.) During the Tribulation, the Bride is prepared for, "Operation Footstool", the second phase of Christ's strategic victory, when all enemies are put under His feet. **Hebrews 1:13**

4. Sign of Royalty.

- a.) The sign of royalty is the unprecedented universal indwelling, of the Holy Spirit. **I Corinthians 6:19-20**
- b.) The purpose of this indwelling is to glorify Jesus Christ. **John 7:37-39**

5. Security of Royalty.

a.) The sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit guarantees the eternal security of the believer. Ephesians 1:13,14

b.) Positional sanctification places every believer in the "palace" (heaven) forever. **Ephesians 1:3,4,11**

6. Function of Royalty

a.) The believer must advance toward the objective of spiritual maturity, at which time he receives the accoutrements of royalty as well as the tactical victory of the angelic conflict.

b.) The believer fulfils the status of royalty in the modus operandi of the new priesthood. **Hebrews 7-13**

7. Future of Royalty.

As members of the Body of Christ and the Royal Priesthood (**1 Peter 2:9**) all Church Age believers will return with Christ at the Second Advent to participate in the strategic victory of the overthrow of Satan and possibly also in the Millennial reign of Christ. **1 Thessalonians 3:13; Revelation 5:10**

CHRISTIAN LIFE – WALKING AND LIVING IN THE LIGHT

1. Light is a metaphor of God's manifestation in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and his work - John 1:4, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46.

2. The Lord's coming was prophesied in Isaiah 49:6 cf. Acts 13:47.

3. Light was seen in the darkness of the world - Matthew 4:16, Luke 2:32.

4. The Lord brought life and light to the gospel - 2 Timothy 1:10.

5. We as believers are light bearers - Matthew 5:14-16, or sons of the light - John 12:36. The Lord is to be seen in us.

6. We are children of the light - 1 Thessalonians 5:5, 1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 5:8, John 11:9,10.

7. Doctrine is the light of the soul - 1 Peter 1:19.

8. Satan is an angel of light and the distorter of the truth - 2 Corinthians 11:14.

9. Satan's strategy is to outshine the true light with his own false gospel - 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

10. The Lord's resurrection body was composed of light - Matthew 17:2.

DEATH

1. In essence, death means "separation" from something/someone.

2. Types of death:

- a) Physical death - is the separation of the soul from the body (**Genesis 35:18**).
 - b) Spiritual death - is separation from God, having no relationship with God (**Ephesians 2:1,12, Genesis 2:17,3:8**)
 - c) The second death - this is the Great White Throne Judgement followed by the lake of fire for unbelievers - separation from the presence of God, punished forever (**Revelation 20:12-15, 21:8**)
 - d) Positional death - Christians are identified with Jesus Christ in His death (separation from sin) and in His resurrection (living in righteousness) **Romans 6:3-14 Colossians 2:12-14**
 - e) Sexual death - inability to procreate (**Romans 4:17-21, Hebrews 11:11-12**)
 - f) Operational death - faith without works is non operational (**James 2:26**)
 - g) Temporal death - a carnal believer, out of fellowship with God (**Romans 8:6-8,13, Ephesians 5:14, 1 Timothy 5:6, James 1:15, Revelation 3:1**)
3. Reasons for death (Why we can relax into Christ's arms – for our life is in His hands):
- a) Your work on earth is finished. (**John 19:30 cf. Luke 23:46, 2 Timothy 4:7**)
 - b) For the glory of God - martyrdom (**John 21:19, Acts 7:55-60**)
 - c) The sin unto death - extreme discipline for believers with hardened hearts against God's will for their life – determined not to fulfil their path. (**1 John 5:16**)
 - d) Suicide - superimposing your will over God's will for your life (**1 Samuel 31:4, Matthew 27:5**)
 - e) The unique death of Christ - committing His own spirit to the Father (**Luke 23:46**)

DYING GRACE

1. We are all here upon the earth as in a "strange country"; we are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth and are not meant to be too comfortable here. **Philippians 3:12-17, Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11.**
2. Death is the strangest thing we confront on this earth; the weirdness of being here one minute, alive, alert and warm, then a second later, dead, cooling and inert. Death is meant to appear strange to us, for it is the evidence before us that we are not permanent inhabitants here, but simply playing out a part as we pass through. This is not a place we are meant to get attached to. Refer Death.
3. The death of believers is a precious thing to the God who has given his life to save us from the judgement of sin and death. **1 Samuel 26:21, 2 Kings 1:13-14, Psalms 49:8, 72:14, 116:15, 1 Peter 1:7, 2:4.** Refer Grace.
4. We all must die, but that is not the end. **2 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 11:13.** The mature believers facing death see through it, to the other side where they meet with the Lord face to face. **1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.**
5. Dying grace is provided to all believers who are looking to their Lord as they die, for his perfect provision for each of us from eternity past has everything we need provided in advance

of our life, let alone our death itself. There are no surprises to God, and all things we face have provision for them there to be claimed by faith. **1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Peter 2:9, Jude 24-25.**

DRINKING ALCOHOL

1. Drunkenness is always condemned as a sin in the Bible. (Proverbs 20:1, 23:20, Isaiah 5:11-22, 28:7, 8, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:11, Ephesians 5:18)
2. Drinking of alcoholic beverages is to be avoided in certain positions of leadership.
 - (a) Kings (rulers, government leaders) (Proverbs 31:4, 5)
 - (b) Pastors (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
 - (c) Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8)
3. Drinking of alcoholic beverages proved disastrous for certain persons
 - (a) Noah (Genesis 9:21)
 - (b) Nabal (1 Samuel 25:36,37)
 - (c) Ephraim(Isaiah 28:1)
 - (d) Lot (Genesis 19:32-6)
4. Drinking of alcoholic beverages is condoned in certain areas. For example:- for medicinal reasons, or where customary with meals, moderate amounts of alcoholic beverages are permissible (Proverbs 31:6-7, 1 Timothy 5:23) Normal cough mixture for instance contains a significant amount of alcohol.
5. It is possible that the water which Jesus Christ turned into wine was an alcoholic beverage (John 2:1 -11). This passage neither condemns nor condones drinking of alcoholic beverages but was the use of a miracle to focus attention on the person of Jesus Christ as the God-Man-Saviour. Wine produces joy in the heart. (Judges 9:13, Psalm 104:15)
6. Alcoholism forms a part of the pattern of national disaster (Joel 1:4-6, Isaiah 28). It leads to economic depression and encourages military invasion. Jeremiah 13:12-17
7. Adverse effects of excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages:-
 - (a) Leads to impulsive, abusive and irresponsible behaviour, vehicle accidents.
 - (b) Causes paralysis of the eyes (Wernicke's disease), tunnel vision.
 - (c) Destroys brain tissue.
 - (d) Produces cirrhosis of the liver,
 - (e) Results in delirium tremens (D.T.'s) which cause confusion, anxiety, terror and delusions.
 Alcoholism is drug addiction which involves destruction of the soul. (Galatians 5:20-21)
8. Importance of abstinence from alcoholic beverages in youth cannot be over emphasised.
9. Conditions under which indulgence in alcoholic beverage should be avoided from a believer's viewpoint.
 - (a) Application of the law of love - towards believers.
 - (b) Law of expediency - towards unbelievers: used when drinking becomes a false issue in presenting the gospel.
 - (c) Law of supreme sacrifice - towards God: applicable when drinking hinders a specific ministry.

Application - In Australia probably alcohol should be avoided because of major problems, vehicle accidents, social problems. In Greece however, a glass of wine with a meal would be expected and rejection by a Christian could cause a false issue.

10. Drinking is related to degeneracy. Wine and drunkenness are used in the Scripture to represent the entire principle of sublimation involved in rejecting God's way. (Jeremiah 13:12-17)

ETERNITY FUTURE

In eternity future:

1. God reveals to us exceeding riches of His grace (**Ephesians 2:7**).
2. God brings many sons into glory (**Hebrews 2:10**).
3. Believers enjoy an inheritance (**1 Peter 1:4**).
4. It is God's purpose for the church to know the manifold wisdom of God (**Ephesians 3:10**).
5. All former things pass away. There will be no more death, sorrow, pain, crying, sea, night or sun. (**Rev 21:1-5,23**)
6. The curse will be lifted (**Revelation 22:3**).
7. All things in heaven and earth will be gathered in Him (**Ephesians 1:10**).
8. The present creation will be forgotten (**Isaiah 65:17**).
9. A river of water of life will run (**Revelation 22:1**).
10. The tree of life will be seen again (**Revelation 22:2**).
11. The Son of God will rule eternally (**Daniel 2:44; 7:13,14**).
12. He will still be subject to the Father (**John 10:29; 1 Corinthians 15:28**).
13. The lake of fire will continue forever (**Isaiah 66:24; Revelation 14:11**).

ETERNITY PAST

1. Jesus Christ existed before the foundation of the world in glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit (**John 1:1-2; 17:5,24**).
2. In eternity past the Godhead agreed to permit sin to become manifest in the world of men before being eliminated forever from the universe (**Hebrews 9:26**).
3. In eternity past the Son of God agreed to come to earth as a human being to destroy the works of the devil (**1 John 3:8**).
4. In eternity past it was ordained that Christ would be slain for the ungodly (**1 Peter 1:18-20; Hebrews 10:5-10**).
5. In eternity past the world and stars were created by Jesus Christ (**Hebrews 1:10; Colossians 1:16**).
6. Man was placed on the earth to be made "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (**1 Corinthians 4:9**).
7. In eternity past believers were chosen in Christ (**Ephesians 1:4**). Christ is chosen, we share as believers his election.
8. In eternity past a book was written containing the names of those who would believe and survive the destruction of the universe (**Philippians 4:3; Revelation 17:8; 20:15**).

However, whilst God knew who would believe, he did not coerce human free will. Here we confront again the “bounds of sense” while we are still within the limits of space-time thinking, for God is beyond all limits of space-time and sees all history as present. Don’t think too long about these things or your mind will start to unravel. We confront our limits here, but in heaven we also will be beyond these limitations. The best is yet to come – its way more wonderful....

FEAR

1. Fear is seen in two ways in scripture.

[a] Firstly as a mental attitude sin that is incompatible with our status as children of the most high, the ruler of the universe.

[b] Secondly it is used to describe the correct attitude towards God the Lord for all his creatures.

There is godly fear, awe, and respect for God as God, and there is inappropriate fear, which is the cringing fear of one who believes the other is able to hurt them. This second kind is wrong for us as children of God, for none can harm us without God’s permission for we belong to Him.

2. Our occupation with the persons and majesty of God is often spoken of as “fear” in the legitimate sense for believers. 2 Samuel 23:2-3, Nehemiah 5:9, Job 28:28, Psalms 19:9, 34:11-12, 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, 10:27, 22:4, Malachi 3:16, Ephesians 5:21.

3. Fear as a mental attitude sin is spoken of in, 1 Samuel 17:11, 24, Proverbs 29:25.

4. In God’s grace plan for us fear has no place. His plans for us are always divinely good, and any testing situation is for our good. Romans 8:28.

5. Fear is an expression of a failure of faith in the plan. Exodus 14:13-14, Deuteronomy 31:6-8, Joshua 8:1, 1 Chronicles 28:20, Isaiah 41:10, 2 Timothy 1:7.

6. Spiritual death is one way of describing Satan’s kingdom and is the place of the source of fear. Hebrews 2:14,15

7. In spiritual death, Adam was afraid. Genesis 3:10, this fear motivated Adam to produce religious activity (fig leaves) and lies. Genesis 3:7

8. Salvation removes the basis of fear, which is condemnation from the Justice of God (spiritual death).

9. Spiritual maturity provides freedom from fear. 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 13:6, 1 John 4:18, 1 Corinthians 13:5b

10. Carnality and any form of religious activity that leads us away from grace and daily obedience to the Word enslaves the believer to Satan through fear. Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:15

11. The mature believer is commanded to fear nothing he may suffer in life, for by means of God’s grace provision all we ever may need is provided for us. Revelation 2:10

12. The baby believer is sustained by believing God’s Word, obeying his commands hour by hour to daily life, and rest upon his promises. Hebrews 4

13. As we become mature believers we continue with this resting on the promises but in addition to this we are sustained by our understanding / application of entire categories of God's Word - we have then moved beyond the promises to confidence in the very character of God itself.

14. Illustration: A woman who asks every hour, "Do you love me?" needs assurance through many promises, and many actions backing the promises up. Once she gets to truly know her husband, and her love is fully established in him through his faithfulness to her, she has absolute assurance, and doesn't need constant reminders of his love by specific words. She is full of confidence through knowledge of her husband's character.

15. Chapter's 3-6 of Hebrews deal with the falling away from growth and confidence by these believers. The spiritual principle of Chapter 4 is the means of getting them back on target.

16. In Hebrews 13:6, we see the objective of the writer, freedom from fear by their daily, moment by moment living the awareness of the love of Christ for them, and the power of Christ available to them.

17. The writers of Scripture identify correctly that when the believer is fearful, he imitates the unbeliever ("cowardly" – Revelation 21:8), and that is not right given our great position. Hebrews 11:27 "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is unseen." This is our standard!

18. Fear is a mental attitude sin that shows our mind has moved away from thinking of the Lord. 1 Samuel 17:11,24

19. Fear is a sign of falling back into domination by the "prince of this world". 1 Samuel 18:12,29, 21:12, 28:20

20. Absence of fear is a big part of maintaining a dynamic mental attitude. Hebrews 13:6, 11:27

21. There is only one legitimate fear; it is the fear of failure to enter spiritual maturity. Hebrews 4:1

22. Love demands absence of fear. 1 John 4:18 They are two opposing mental attitudes.

23. Fear is not part of the Divine Plan for the Believer. 2 Timothy 1:7; Exodus 14:13-14; Joshua 8:1; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Samuel 1:7

24. Courage and lack of fear is a sign of mature spiritual status. Psalm 3:6, 56:3; Hebrews 11:27

25. Fear is the power by which the Evil of Satan rules among mankind. Hebrews 2:14-15; Genesis 19:30 (Lot); 1 Kings 18:9-14 (Obadiah), both Lot and Obadiah show how the failing believer lives in constant fear.

26. Fear is the word used to mean "Occupation with Christ" when related to the attitude of the mature Believer toward Christ. 2 Samuel 23:3; Nehemiah 5:9,15; Ephesians 5:21; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9, 34:10; Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, 10:27; 1 Peter 2:17

FULLNESS OF TIME

This expression is taken from (Mark 1:15; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians. 1:10). It means

1. The world was prepared by God for the arrival of Jesus and the spreading of the Gospel.
2. Rome ruled the world. The Roman Empire gave peace in place of constant tribal warfare; it had cleared the sea of pirates and had made an excellent road network. This made it possible for the messengers of Christ to travel quickly.
3. Greek was the common language. The Old Testament had been translated into the Greek (the Septuagint).
4. Most cities had a synagogue and with it a group of people, Jews and proselytes, who knew God and the Old Testament.
5. Greek philosophy had made many people doubt their polytheistic religion. The Roman State religion was a political affair, offering no peace of mind. This left a moral vacuum.
6. Thus the situation was "ideal" for the rapid expansion of the church. As Mordecai said years before to Esther. "We are here for such a time as this". Just so with us as we age, every year is God's year for us to serve until we die. We are here in God's plan for our lives at exactly the time in history we are meant to be – let us grasp the day – it is God's day for us.

GOD – CHARACTER OF GOD

1. Whilst God is three persons all three persons have exactly the same essence or character:

a) SOVEREIGNTY

The Father (**Ephesians 1:11, cf. Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 6:10, Hebrews 10:7, 9**)

The Son (**John 5:21, Revelation 19:16**)

The Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:11, cf. Hebrews 2:4**)

b) RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Father (**John 17:25**)

The Son (**Luke 1:35, Hebrews 7:26, 2 Corinthians 5:21**)

The Spirit - The Holy Spirit

c) JUSTICE

The Father (**Job 37:23, cf. 8:3**)

The Son (**Acts 3:14, John 5:22, Revelation 19:11**)

The Spirit (**Nehemiah 9:20**)

d) LOVE

The Father (**John 3:16**)

The Son (**Ephesians 5:25, 1 John 3:16**)

The Spirit (**John 16:7-11, 1 Corinthians 2:10**)

e) ETERNAL LIFE

The Father (**John 5:26**)

The Son (**Micah 5:2, cf. John 1:1-2, 1 John 5:11**)

The Spirit (**Isaiah 48:16**)

f) ALL-KNOWING

The Father (**Hebrews 4:13, cf. Matthew 11:27, 1 Peter 1:2**)

The Son (**John 18:4, cf. Matthew 9:4, John 2:25, 1 Corinthians 4:5**)

The Spirit (**Isaiah 11:2, cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11**)

g) EVERYWHERE

The Father (**2 Chronicles 2:6**)

The Son (**Matthew 28:20, cf. Ephesians 1:23**)

The Spirit (**Psalms 139:7**)

h) ALL-POWERFUL

The Father (**Mark 14:36, cf. 1 Peter 1:5**)

The Son (**Hebrews 1:3, cf. Matthew 24:30, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 3:21**)

The Spirit (**Romans 15:19**)

i) UNCHANGEABLE

The Father (**Hebrews 6:17, Psalm 33:11**)

The Son (**Hebrews 13:8**)

The Spirit (**John 14:16**)

j) TRUTH

The Father (**John 7:28, John 17:3**)

The Son (**1 John 5:20, cf. John 1:14, 14:6, Revelation 19:11**)

The Spirit (**1 John 5:6, cf. John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13**)

GOD – DIVINE DECREES

1. This is the term in theology that refers to the plan of God coming to us from eternity past. It means that the Lord God, our heavenly Father, has had a plan from eternity past (before time and space were made) and that plan has been “decreed” to be the plan for this universe, and that this plan is as certain as there was a beginning to this universe, and that there will be an end. Though the universe will end, the plan of God, as it came from before the universe, continues on in its effect after this universe is ended and has been replaced by the new one. **2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:18.**

2. The plan centres on the person and work of the second person of the Trinity; it centres around the person of Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 1:4-6, 1 John 3:23.**

3. Entrance into the plan of God is dependent upon grace. The sovereignty of God expressed in the divine decrees he has made about the plan, meet man’s free will at the Cross. Grace + faith = salvation.

By saving people by grace, God’s perfect holy character is not compromised by the transaction. No-one is saved by works, for there is nothing that a creature of space and time can do to impress the creator of space and time, nor is there anything that sin can do to impress or pressure holiness. **John 3:16-36, Ephesians 2:8-9.**

4. God’s plan for this universe is designed in such a way that every event is “decreed”; his plan includes all causes, conditions, and outcomes, there is no real contingency that has not been foreseen and planned for from before time. All this has been achieved in accordance with the holy purposes of God, yet without violating human volition, man’s free will. The universe is one of both freewill and determinism. Such a contradiction exists only in our minds, limited as they are by space and time. This plan is far greater than our minds can comprehend, for it was made by the creator of space and time, who lives and moves and has

his being beyond such limitations of thoughts and realities. When we consider this doctrine of decrees, we enter a realm beyond our dimension, and far above and beyond any space travel fantasies of man. **Acts 2:23, Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2.**

5. God's plan comes from his entire character, not just foreknowledge. It has been drawn up with no violation of man's free will choices, for which each is held responsible. The outcomes are certain because of the divine decrees that make them so, yet the people within the plan have the freedom to choose and no-one before the throne of the creator will be able to say, "I had to fall; you predestined me to!" Each will be judged by their works, freely chosen, and by their rejection of the Lord, freely done. **Revelation 20:11 – 21:1.**

6. Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism in their theologies capture the full magnitude of the divine decrees, for both try to explain in the human terms of, sovereignty, foreknowledge and free will, yet the reality of the Plan of God comes from beyond all such time and space limited concepts. This doctrine is bigger than our limited minds and languages, and it behoves all who discuss this to recognise their limits as they speak of such things as this. How can a thing be certain and yet also freely done? A moment's reflection gives us the answer once we think about different perspectives on an event; from time and non-time. The only reason people have difficulty with such things is because most have not been trained in philosophy of science or physics.

7. Whenever Paul discussed these things he sang of them; if we understand the truth about the greatness of the character and plan of God we will still be baffled over this, while we live in time, but we will go on our way rejoicing. **Acts 8:39, Galatians 6:4, Hebrews 3:6.** Refer ELECTION, CHARACTER OF GOD, ETERNITY. By the "fruit of rejoicing" our real knowledge will be shown.

GOD – GOD CARES FOR YOU

1. God knows ...

- a) Our sorrows. (**Exodus 3:7**)
- b) Our devotions. (**2 Chronicles 16:9**)
- c) Our thoughts. (**Psalms 44:21**)
- d) Our foolishness. (**Psalms 69:5**)
- e) Our frailties. (**Psalms 103:14**)
- f) Our deeds. (**Psalms 139:2**)
- g) Our words. (**Psalms 139:4**)
- h) The composition of the universe. (**Psalms 147:4**)
- i) All things. (**Proverbs 15:3**)
- j) Our needs. (**Matthew 6:32**)
- k) About animal creation. (**Matthew 10:29**)
- l) Mankind. (**Matthew 10:30**)

m) What might or could have been. (**Matthew 11:23**)

n) His own. (**John 10:14**)

o) Past, present and future. (**Acts 15:18**)

2. God is able to ...

a) Save forever those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ - **Hebrews 7:25**

b) Supply every need - **2 Corinthians 9:8**

c) Deliver all who are tempted - **Hebrews 2:18**

d) Sustain the weak believer and make him stand - **Romans 14:4**

e) Keep us from falling and make us blameless - **Jude 24,25**

f) Surpass all that we could ask or think - **Ephesians 3:20**

g) Raise us up in resurrection in the likeness of His Son - **Hebrews 11:19**

3. With God, all things are possible - **Matthew 19:26**

4. God is in control. Nothing will ever happen to you that you are not able to deal with. (**1 Corinthians 10:13**)

5. God's character is stable.

a) If God is for you who can be against you. (**Romans 8:31-34**)

b) No matter what happens God's love is stable. (**Romans 8:35-39**)

6. God's promises are secure for He is always with us. (**Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 1:19**)

7. God's power is always the same:-

a) He will always keep us. (**John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12,**)

b) God does not forget us or lose His power to keep. (**Jude 24**)

c) Even if we fall away from fellowship we still are saved. (**2 Timothy 2:13**)

8. God knew before time what we would need in time and has provided for the supply of all our needs. (**Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12,**)

9. God has the power to bless us. (**2 Corinthians 9:8**)

10. God is able to make all grace abound towards us. (**Ephesians 3:20**)

GOD – FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Fatherhood comes in various concepts:-

1. The Fatherhood over creation - Ephesians 3:14-15 - all beings have their origin in God. We get our life and very existence from God. There is therefore a brotherhood in the creation. The liberals however take this a step further and talk about the brotherhood of man and the universal Fatherhood of God which is a lie which is exposed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said that all men are not brothers but only become such in Christ. Even Satan was given his life by God. There is no relationship in the Father creatorship combination.

2. Fatherhood by intimate relationship which is the concept of the relationship between God and Israel. In Exodus 4:22 Israel is my son - this is my firstborn. This is more than God saying that He is their creator but it is less than saying that they are regenerated. In the New Testament it says that all Israel is not Israel. There is however a relationship between the Father and Israel, a care for Israel. He preserves the nation. In the Bible the word father is used a large number of times in relation to the relationship between God and Israel. However only a few Jews were regenerated.

3. A specific relationship between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ - Ephesians 1:3. The first specific revelation of the New Testament is that God the Father is the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also shows without any doubt the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ by His attributes and His works. The words father and son are used in the New Testament to show the intimacy of the relationship between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with out fulfilling all the relationships which would be true of a human relationship of Father and Son. This was the error of the Arian theologians who said that he was a son of God but not equal with God.

4. The second person has been the Son from eternity past. For eternity there has been this close relationship between the Father and the Son. In Isaiah 9:6 it shows that a child is born but a son is given. The baby was born but the Son was given as the Son had existed forever. What they are saying is that you think of the most noble father and the best possible son and the love between those two and you get a small glimpse of the relationship between the Father and the Son.

5. The Father of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6-7)

[a] Only in Christ do we become brothers. (Galatians 3:27-29) This is the result of the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into the body of Christ and makes us a new creation in Him. (1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:5)

[b] God is not the spiritual father of the unregenerate man, they are His creation but not His children. (John 14:6) Before salvation we were sons of our sinful nature. (John 8:42-47, Ephesians 2:19)

6. In summary therefore

[a] The Son of God is said to have been begotten of the Father - Psalm 2:7, John 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18 1 John 4:9

[b] The Father acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as His Son - Matthew 3:17, 17:5, Luke 9:35

[c] The Father is acknowledged by the Son - Matthew 11:27, 26:63-64, Luke 22:29, John 8:16-29, 33-44, 17:1 The Son is subject to the Father's plan but it should be remembered that the plan had been a joint plan when it was conceived with its recognition of role and responsibility.

[d] The fact that God the Father is acknowledged by men to be the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ - Matthew 16:16, Mark 15:39, John 1:34, 49, Acts 3:13

[e] The Son acknowledges the Father by being subject to Him - John 8:29,49

[f] Even the demons recognise this relationship between the Father and the Son - Matthew 8:29. Satan's eternal damnation relies on this relationship and its permanency.

7. Before salvation all members of the human race were "sold under sin", we were strangers before God, not sons - Romans 7:14, Ephesians 2:19. Spiritually we were dead, we had no relationship with God other than creatures to the creator we did not recognise - Ephesians 2:1

8. Before salvation we were all of different races, the only brotherhood we can ever have is in Christ - Galatians 3:27-29.

9. Salvation alone makes us children of God. Before we were slaves of sin, sons of our old sin nature, children of rebellion - Ephesians 2:19, John 8:42-47, 1John 3:10-15.

10. Only God can make us his children, for only God has that power - John 1:12,13. We are either 'born-again', born from above or we remain spiritually dead, children of Satan - John 3:3,6,36.

11. Unbelievers cannot and will not see this unique relationship. 1John 3:1, 1 Corinthians 1:18. As sons of rebellion they believe their father's lie i.e. the universal fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood of man (both of which are false concepts). John 8:44. This lie perpetrates the idea that God is a "soft-touch" and will not judge man for their sin, but all will be well in the end. This is declared false by God in his word.

12. Believers sonship guarantees heirship, eternal life and fellowship for them - 1 John 3:2,3, Romans 8:16-18.

13. The Holy Spirit is God's down payment on the believer's inheritance - the assurance of more to come - Ephesians 1:14.

14. Believers are heirs of eternal life through relationship with God in Christ - John 8:35, 51.

[a] Receiving rewards: Colossians 3:24,25, 2 John 8, 1 Corinthians 3:8 and,

[b] Receiving a resurrection body: 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.

15. The source of our confidence is based in the Lords resurrection. He is therefore our "lively hope" - 1 Peter 1:3-5. He can be depended upon to meet all needs for we will be with him forever - John 14:1-4.

GOD – PLAN OF GOD

1. In eternity past, God designed a plan for every believer, which takes into account every event and decision in human history.

2. The plan centres on the person of Jesus Christ. (**1 John 3:23, Ephesians 1:4-6**)

3. Entrance into the plan is based on the principle of grace (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**) where the sovereignty of God and the free will of Man meet at the cross. God brings salvation which is complete, Man brings his faith.

4. God's plan was so designed so as to include all events and actions. (**1 Peter 1:2**)
5. Under His plan God has decreed to do some things directly and some through agencies, Israel, the Church.
6. Without interfering with human free will in any way God has designed a plan so perfect that it includes cause and effect, as well as provision, preservation and function.
7. There are many functions in the Plan of God. They all constitute one whole comprehensive plan which is perfect, eternal and unchangeable.
8. The plan of God is consistent with human freedom and does not limit or coerce human free will. Distinction should be made between what God causes and what God permits. God causes the Cross but permits sin. God is neither the author of sin nor sponsors sin.
9. His plan portrays that man has free will. God never condones sin in the human race. Man started in perfect environment and innocence. Man sinned of his own free will. Man will sin in the perfect environment of the Millennium.
10. Distinction should be made between the divine plans which are related to the plan of God and divine laws which regulate human conduct on the earth. Divine laws occur in time, divine plans occur in eternity.
11. God's plans derive from His foreknowledge. He recognised in eternity past those things which are certain. The foreknowledge of God makes no things certain, but only perceives in eternity past those things that are certain.
12. There is a difference between foreknowledge and fore ordination. Fore ordination establishes certainty but does not provide for the certainty which is established. It is the plan that provides. (**Romans 8:29, Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 1:2**)
13. Therefore the elect are foreknown and the foreknown are elect. God knew in eternity past what way each free will would go for each particular problem in life. God does not coerce human free will but He does know what way each freewill will choose at any given time. As free will decides so God provides.
14. Since God cannot contradict His own character He plans the best for the believer. God is perfect, His plan and provisions are therefore perfect.
15. The cross was planned in eternity past but the human free will of Christ decided for the cross at Gethsemane. (**Matthew 26:39-42**) God has provided salvation through the cross and it is a free will decision as to whether one accepts it or not.
16. No plan in itself opposes human freedom but once a choice is made from the free will then the plan limits your human freedom. At the same time it gives you the freedom to love and appreciate God. God lays down the means of living the Christian life.

GOOD WORKS

1. Anything we can do in our own strength (human good) is unacceptable to God (Isaiah 64:6, Romans 8:8).

2. Only those things we do in the power of the Holy Spirit (divine good) are acceptable to God, since it is God Himself who produces the work in us (Ephesians 2:10).

3. When a believer produces human good he imitates an unbeliever (Galatians 5:19-21, 1 John 2:11, 3:4).

4. When a believer produces divine good he imitates Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2).

5. Human good is:

a) Identified as dead works (Hebrews 6:1).

b) Cannot save mankind (Titus 3:5).

c) Is condemned by God (1 Corinthians 3:11-16; Ecclesiastes 12:14).

d) Is the basis of indictment at the Last Judgement (Revelation 20:11-15).

e) Has no place in the plan of God (2 Timothy 1:9).

f) Is destroyed at the Judgement Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

6. Divine good is the basis of rewards (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

7. God is satisfied with His own work in four general areas:

a) IN SALVATION

God approves of what God has done in the form of Jesus Christ. God the Father is propitiated by the work of God the Son on the cross. To be saved is to believe or trust on God the Son (Acts 16:31). Belief has no human merit, all the merit is in the work of Jesus Christ. God does not approve of human good. (Isaiah 64:6).

b) IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

God approves of the works done under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality therefore is dependent on who and what the Holy Spirit is and whether or not the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit. The way to the filling of the Holy Spirit is confession of sins (1 John 1:9). Confession has no human merit. The Holy Spirit also provides at least one spiritual gift to each believer at salvation (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

c) IN THE WORD OF GOD

The word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21). It is the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). The Holy Spirit makes the Word of God effective in our lives.

d) IN ETERNITY

In eternity human works are removed (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). God provides us with a new body (1 Corinthians 15:51-3). God provides us with an incorruptible inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5). God provides everything for our eternal future (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). God approves of His provision.

8. Spiritual growth in the full knowledge and application of Bible doctrine produces divine good in the life. Divine good in our lives is the production of the Holy Spirit filled and led believer. Ephesians 2:8-10, Colossians 1:9-10, 2 Timothy 2:21, 3:17.

9. As we produce much spiritual fruit in our life we demonstrate before all the victory of the Holy Spirit over the enemy. 2 Thessalonians 2:17. In heaven we are rewarded for all divine good production in time. 2 Corinthians 5:10, 9:8.

10. Spiritual production of divine good, through the ministries of the Holy Spirit, is contrasted to the production of human works (good and evil), the fruit of the Old Sin Nature. Refer HOLY SPIRIT, OLD SIN NATURE.

11. Human good; even the best that man can do in his own strength, has no value before God at all and has no place or part to play in the plan of God for the believer. 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5.

12. Human good works apart from God's power and direction, is the basis of man's condemnation before the throne of God. 1 Corinthians 3:11-16, Revelation 20:12-15.

GRACE

1. Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the cross. Therefore Grace is unmerited favour from God.

2. Grace depends on the character of God therefore Grace depends on who and what God is. Grace is what God can do for man and still be true to his own character.

3. The believer must recognise the difference between legalism and grace. Legalism is man's work intruding upon the plan of God.

4. The greatest thing God can do for the saved person is to make him exactly like His Son Jesus Christ. This is accomplished in three stages of sanctification.

5. **Positional Sanctification:** At Salvation every believer enters into union with Christ. (**Hebrews 1:2**) Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father and is therefore superior to all angels in his humanity. At the point of salvation we are entered into union with Christ thus we are positionally higher than angels. We are positionally seated with Christ at God's right hand.

6. **Experiential Sanctification:** During the Christian's life on the earth the time spent under the power of the Holy Spirit. During this time we produce the character of God in our lives - gold, silver, precious stones. (**1 Corinthians 3:12-15**)

7. **Ultimate Sanctification:** When the believer receives a resurrection body he loses the sin nature and all human good. At this point the believer is physically superior to all angels. He remains in this perfect state eternally.

8. All believers have tasted of Grace at least once (**1 Peter 2:3**). This refers to the point of Salvation at which the believer receives at least 34 things which he did not earn or deserve. (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**) Disorientation to grace is the believer's greatest occupational hazard in his Christian life. (**Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 12:15**)

9. The divine attitude to grace is expressed in (**Isaiah 30:18, 19**) God is constantly waiting to pour out his blessing on all believers in the Christian life.

10. Grace in salvation is expressed in many ways. It is always the same - believing in Jesus Christ (**Psalms 103:8-12, Romans 3:23-4, Romans 4:4, 5:20, Ephesians 2:8, 9**)

11. There are many ways in which the Christian life expresses GRACE:

- a) Prayer (**Hebrews 4:16**)
- b) Suffering (**2 Corinthians 12:9, 10**)
- c) Growth (**2 Peter 3:18**)
- d) Stability (**1 Peter 5:12**)
- e) Lifestyle (**Hebrews 12:28, 2 Corinthians 1:12**)
- f) Production of Divine Good (**1 Corinthians 15:10, 2 Corinthians 6:1**)

12. Grace is the correct attitude in relation to giving. (**2 Corinthians 8 & 9**)

13. Grace is the only means of coping with suffering in the Christian life. (**2 Corinthians 12:7-10**)

Through Grace God is able to bless the believer in the midst of the pressures and adversities of life. (**1 Peter 1:6,7**)

14. Implications of grace:

- a) God is perfect, his plan is perfect.
- b) A perfect plan can only originate from a perfect God.
- c) If man could do anything in the plan of God the plan would no longer be perfect.
- d) A plan is no stronger than its weakest link. Grace therefore excludes all human merit, all human ability.
- e) Legalism, human works is the enemy of Grace.
- f) The works of human righteousness have therefore no place in the plan of God. (Isaiah 64:6)

HEAVEN AND HELL

SIMILARITIES

They are both real places. The Lord Jesus is very specific about Hell by using the word "topos" from which we get "topography" meaning a detailed description of a specific place. (**Luke 16:28**).

PURPOSE: To show God's glory.

Hell shows His glory by His perfect judgement and punishment on evil. Satan, demons and evil people finally get what they deserve in Hell.

God punishes justly, man cannot. That is what so many people, even the unsaved, find so frustrating about today, an unjust legal system.

HEAVEN

1. Heaven is where Jesus is. (**Acts 1:1-11; Acts 7:55**)
2. We will be reunited with loved ones in perfect happiness. We will also meet all the saints and the great names of the Bible. (**2 Samuel 12:23; Luke 16:22,23; Matthew 19:14; John 14:2**)
3. No sin. (**Rev 21:27**)
4. You have a special, spacious dwelling place (mansion) personally prepared by LJC perfectly customized to your personality and character. (**John 14:2**)
5. A pure and clean and perfectly peaceful environment. (**Rev 21:27**)
6. God wipes away every tear. (**Rev 21:4**)
7. No pain, sickness or suffering in a glorious body that never tires. (Perfect health!) **Rev 21:4.**
8. A place of light radiating from God's glory. No darkness. (**Rev 21:23**)
9. Can eat and drink, but not necessary for life. (**Luke 24:42,43; Rev 22:1,2**)
10. Will spend eternity worshipping and serving God. (**Rev 5:10, Rev 22:3-6**)

You can do study and learn and explore all things and places, yet never reach full knowledge. There is no boredom in Heaven!

HELL

Hell is complete separation from God, everlasting destruction. (**Matthew 25:46**)

People are with Satan, demons, murderers, the immoral and perverted, liars, boasters, haters of God etc. (**Rev 21:8, Romans 1:26-31**).

Sin is unlimited and gets worse and worse (**Rev 22:11**).

Shared accommodation in the Lake of Fire. (**Rev 22:15**)

Burns with intolerable heat and brimstone which is sulphur that gives off a foul smelling, highly toxic gas. (**Rev 14:10; 21:8**)

Weeping (intense, body shaking, uncontrollable crying) that never stops. (**Matthew 8:12**)

! A place of sorrows, **Ps 18:5**

Pain of the whole body on fire but not consumed by it, gnashing of teeth in blind rage at yourself, your sins, other people and at God. Their torment never stops.

Complete darkness, despite the flames, which are never put out. (**Matthew 25:30**)

They scream for water and mercy. (**Luke 16:24**). They will drink the wine of God's righteous anger (**Rev 14:10**).

A bottomless pit of eternal burning and punishment and torture. (**Rev 20:1**)

Torture added to by watching the activities and happiness of the saved in Heaven. (**Luke 16: 23-26**)

HOLY SPIRIT – FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. We are commanded to allow Him to fill (or fully control) our lives (Ephesians 5:18).
2. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be broken by:
 - a) Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) - sin, doing something you shouldn't.
 - b) Quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) - not doing something you should (like quenching a fire, allowing the flame to go out).
3. The filling (controlling) of the Spirit can be restored by confession of sin and full surrender to do the will of God (1 John 1:9)
4. The Spirit produces the very character of the Christ in the believer: (Galatians 4:19, 5:22, 23, Ephesians 3:16, 17, Philippians 1:20, 21, 2 Corinthians 3:3)
 - a) The fruit of the Spirit:
 - i) Galatians 5:22-23 - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.
 - ii) Romans 14:17 - Righteousness, Peace, Joy.
 - iii) Colossians 3:12-15 - Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness.
 - iv) 1 Thessalonians 1:3 - Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope.
 - b) Rejoicing in Christ (Philippians 3:1, 4:4).
 - c) Loving one another (John 15:12, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 5:2).
 - d) Striving for the faith (Philippians 1:27, Jude 3).
 - e) Putting away all sin (1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 12:1).
 - f) Abstaining from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
 - g) Submitting to injuries (1 Corinthians 6:7).
 - h) Subduing the temper (Ephesians 4:26, James 1:19).
 - i) Shunning the wicked (2 Thessalonians 3:6).
 - j) Abounding in the works of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58 1 Thessalonians 4:1).
 - k) Showing a good example (1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Peter 2:12).
 - l) Following after that which is good (Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 6:11).
 - m) Perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1, 2 Timothy 3:17).
 - n) Hating defilement (Jude 23).
 - o) Overcoming the world. (1 John 5:4-5)
 - p) Adorning the gospel. (Philippians 1:27, Titus 2:10)
 - q) Forgiving injuries. (Romans 12:20)
 - r) Living peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14)
 - s) Visiting the afflicted. (James 1:27)
 - t) Sympathising with others. (Romans 12:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
 - u) Honouring others. (Romans 12:10)
 - v) Submitting to authorities. (Romans 13:1-7)
 - w) Being content. (Philippians 4:11, Hebrews 13:5)
 - x) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
 - y) Walking in the newness of life. (Romans 6:4)
 - z) Walking as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)
 - aa) Glorifies Christ in his body. (Philippians 1:20, 21)
 - bb) Christ is at home in his body. (Ephesians 3:16,17)
 - cc) A lifestyle which honours God in the presence of men. (2 Corinthians 3:3)
5. The filling of the Holy Spirit in every believer only occurs in two dispensations:
 - a) Church age Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23
 - b) Millennium - Joel 2:28, 29 (characterised by ecstasies)

CHRIST – I AM

The use of the “ I AM” means that the Lord was saying that He is God. In Exodus 3:14 God reveals Himself to Moses as, I AM THAT I AM. Using this phrase at His arrest in John 18:2-6, He caused the army group to fall backwards due to His power as God flashing forth for a millisecond, before being led away as a willing sacrifice. We are not confronted with the Jesus of liberalism here, but with the Lord of lords, King of kings, God stepping down to speak authoritatively to mankind. There are seven “I AM’s” in the New Testament.

1. PROVISION - I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE John 6:30-35 - The feeding of the five thousand - a miracle involving bread. God provided miraculous physical food in the desert for forty years - Manna. Christ is our spiritual food. He says that he is the only source of spiritual food for you. There is life in no other. No one else can satisfy the spiritual hunger in man. He tells us He is the bread from heaven - He shows Himself as God. The bread of the Passover - unleavened, pierced and griddled; speaking of his body.

2. SPIRITUALITY - I AM THE LIGHT John 8:12 - The feast of Tabernacles (where He also told the people to have the everlasting water John 7:37-39). When the Lord says this He is saying that He is the only source of pure light as shown in His matchless character. He is stating that He is God. 1 John 1 says that God is light and in Him is there no darkness at all. We are to walk in the light in fellowship with God.

3. SALVATION - I AM THE DOOR John 10:7 - The Sheepfolds of Jerusalem, Psalms 22-24. To be the door of the sheepfold, He is the only way into the plan of God. Anyone that tries to come any other way is a liar and a thief. If this is not true there is no way to God.

4. GUIDANCE - I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD John 10:11 - the good shepherd, the only one who really cares. Many from other religions say that they really care but it is Jesus the good shepherd, the only one who really cares. All other systems drop you into hell.

5. RESURRECTION - I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE John 11:20-25 - The death of Lazarus. Christ conquers death proving He is God, the resurrection and the life, He is the way the truth and life forever. The only way to eternal life is in Christ Jesus. To reject Him is to have eternal life in the Lake of Fire

6. TRUTH/LIFE - I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE John 14: 6 - There is no other way to gain meaning in this life and eternal life than through him. We are related to the King of kings and Lord of lords who came and died for us that we might live. We should be obedient to our Lord who bought us with His blood. I am the way the truth and the life. The only way to live is in the truth, the only way to have life and have it more abundantly is in Him. The only way to God is through the God man Jesus Christ. We need to live in Him as He is the only one who has the truth.

7. PRODUCTION - I AM THE TRUE VINE John 15:1-5 - Walking from the Passover meal past the Temple towards Gethsemane, He talks about the spiritual production that is ours in union with Him. I am the true vine - the only way to spiritual productivity is in Christ Jesus through the fruit of the Spirit. Love Joy Peace and the other fruit is only available in Christ. You have to be in the vine to have fruit. Many unbelievers want joy and peace but they cannot have it without Christ.

MEMORIES

Memories have a number of implications in the Bible:-

1. Memory of the Lord is a part of worship. (Psalm 145:7-10, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)
2. Memory produces happiness. (Proverbs 10:7)
3. It is of the greatest importance to use your memory while you are young. (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
4. Alcohol is related to memory. It causes rulers to forget their responsibilities (Proverbs 31:4-5) and those under great pressure to forget trouble. (Proverbs 31:6-7).
5. Memory has regrets beyond death for unbelievers, the memory of lost opportunity. (Luke 16:25).
6. The word of God must be part of your memories. (2 Peter 1:12-15)
7. Memory can provide for misery and happiness. (Lamentations 3:17-24)
8. Memory is designed to orientate one to grace not to tranquilize us into nostalgia that will debilitate. (Psalm 103:2)

OLD AGE

1. Old Age is a time when we should be even more useful for the Lord than we have been able to be before, as we have the chance to use time that previously has been used in work. The age at which "old age" starts in the church is sixty years of age. **1 Timothy 5:9.**

2. The Bible makes it clear that the elderly are to be respected.

[a] The elders are to be stood up for by the younger in respect for their age. **Leviticus 19:32**

[b] Children are to listen to their parents in the Lord, they are not to despise them if they do not agree with them, but prove they are right by their own good deeds. **Proverbs 23:22.**

[c] Respect is demanded of the believer for the aged. **1 Timothy 5:1,2.**

[d] The army is to protect the elderly from evil invaders of the land. **Deuteronomy 28:50, 2 Chronicles 36:17.**

3. There are problems with old age.

[a] Some will be unteachable, thinking they know everything. **Ecclesiastes 4:13-15.**

[b] Old people are helpless and often need care. **John 21:18.**

[c] They are vulnerable to disease. **1 Kings 15:23.**

[d] They will be victims to their own fears. **Psalm 71:9.**

[e] If they have been disobedient they will feel great terror. **Psalm 6:7, 32:3.**

4. If the elderly have walked close to the Lord for many years the doctrine in their souls is a bank they can draw on in their old age.

[a] Doctrine is profitable in old age. **Proverbs 22:6, Psalm 71:17,18.**

[b] Blessings of maturity are there in old age. **Psalm 148:12-14.**

[c] They have great security and blessing in old age. **Psalms 37:25, Proverbs 17:6, 20:29.**

[d] They have dying grace with the Lord. **Job 42:17, 1 Chronicles 23:1, 29:28, Isaiah 46:4.**

5. In the Millennial kingdom old age is blessed. **Isaiah 65:20, Joel 2:28, Zechariah 8:4.**

6. Standards for old people's service are found in God's Word. **Titus 2:2,3.**

SALVATION – REDEMPTION

1. Redemption is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ towards sin. The implications of the Greek words (lutron, lutrosis, apolutrosis, antilutrosis) is ransom, redeem, pay money to set a slave free, pay a price, or (exagorazo) purchase from the slave market (of sin).

2. The principle of redemption is found in (John 8:31-36).

3. The Lord paid the price for us, redeeming us from the slave market of sin by his perfect sacrifice for sin on the cross. Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 2:14.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only qualified redeemer. Through His virgin birth he has no inherited Old Sin Nature, by His perfect life He had no acquired sin or sin nature, and through His hypostatic union He is equal with both parties: God and man. Isaiah 53:9, John 8:46, 19:4, 2Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 1:3,4:15,7:25,28, 1 Timothy 3:16.

5. In the Old Testament redemption was taught by means of the shed blood of an animal sacrifice. Hebrews 9:22, Job 5:19,25,26.

6. Blood was the purchase price for redemption. Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, 1 Peter 1:18,19. The blood of Christ relates this work of redemption to that which was pictured in these Old Testament sacrifices. 2 Corinthians 5:21.

7. The soul of the believer not the body is redeemed. Psalm 34:22, Matthew 8:17.

8. Redemption removes the demands of the Old Testament Law. Galatians 3:13,10, 4:4-6.

9. Redemption is a doctrine which the believer can apply in times of pressure and catastrophe (Job 19:25,26), thereby finding both blessing and happiness.

10. Redemption results in adoption (Gal 4:4-6).

11. Redemption provides the basis for the believer's eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15).

12. The blood of Christ is the ransom money or the purchase price of redemption (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Peter 1:13,19; 1 John 1:7).

13. Redemption includes forgiveness of sin (Heb 9:22).

14. Redemption provides the basis of justification and immediate cleansing at salvation (Rom 3:24).

15. Redemption is the basis of our cleansing from sin during our Christian walk. (Lev 4:5; 6:1-6; 1 John 1:7,9).

SIN – SIN UNTO DEATH

1. There is a sin unto death and we want to avoid it (1 John 5:16, 17, 1 Corinthians 11:31,32)

2. The sin unto death is the physical death of a believer, where ultimate discipline is administered to the Christian due to unconfessed sin of a serious nature.

3. Confession of sin under the concept of 1 John 1:9 is the way to forgiveness.

4. Examples of sin unto death:-

(a) The Corinthian pervert - (1 Corinthians 5)

(b) The Corinthians who habitually came to the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner. (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

(c) Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52)

(d) Achan (Joshua 7:16-26)

(e) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

5. Whilst there is a sin unto death there is no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus - all believers (Romans 8:1). This is leaving life "early" due to sin and there is eternal loss for the person foolish enough to fall into this.

6. The effect of the sin unto death is to reduce the time which a believer can spend on earth accumulating good of eternal worth. The gold, silver and precious stones of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. It means they lose what God wishes to bless them with. 2 Corinthians 5:1-20.

TIME

1. As God is eternal He is not constrained by space-time as they are the framework only of this temporary creation. "A thousand years are a day and a day as a thousand years to God".

2. We are presently caught within the categories of space-time. We cannot have a thought that isn't limited by space-time and yet we are bound for eternity where all limits are gone.

3. There is a principle of planned time (James 4:13-17).

4. We are to redeem the time - not to waste time in vain pursuits (Ephesians 5:16-18).

5. The principle of utilised time (1 Corinthians 7:29-31). In order to maximise the effectiveness of your Christian life you have to utilise time and time has to be planned by heeding the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

WORLD

1. World under control of Satan:

a) ruler of this world (**John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11**)

b) god of this world (**2 Corinthians 4:4**)

c) he deceives the world (**Revelation 12:9**).

d) Satan is filling the world with his propaganda (**1 Timothy 4:1**).

2. Jesus Christ created earth (**Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:18**). He gave control to original mankind (**Genesis 1:28**) but man lost it at the fall (**Genesis 3:6**).

3. Sin and spiritual death are the basis of Satan's rule over this world. Therefore, God so loved the world that He gave a Saviour (**John 3:16**), hence Christ as a title in this connection. Christ is the light of the world (**John 8:12; 9:5**).

4. Therefore Christ is the saviour of the world (**John 3:17; 4:42; 1 John 4:14**). The Saviour who gave His life for the world (**John 6:33**); hence Christ has a title in this connection. Christ is the light of the world (**John 8:12; 9:5**).

5. Therefore Christ has overcome the world (**John 16:33**), so that the believer can overcome the world (**1 John 5:4,5**).

6. Consequently believers in Christ must not love the world (**1 John 2:15,16**). Nor must believers conform to the world (**Romans 12:2**). Worldliness is what you think, which may be demonstrated by what you do.

7. World control by Satan will stop at the Second Advent. However, believers will continue forever (**1 John 2:17**).

8. Also, the Word of God abides forever (**1 Peter 1:23,25**), and is designed to overcome the ruler of this world (**1 John 2:14**). Therefore, not conforming to the world and overcoming the world are accomplished through Bible doctrine, by which God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (**1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19**).

9. It is therefore of greatest importance that the believer's attitude is based on the Word of God (**Philippians 2:5; 2 Timothy 1:7; Isaiah 26:3,4; Philippians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 10:4,5; 1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 1:5,6,8**).

10. Backsliding is characterised as friendship with the world (**James 4:4**).

WORLDLINESS

1. Worldliness means to follow the beliefs and philosophy of man rather than that of God

2. Worldliness is the opposite of godliness; it is thinking/doing in opposition to God's revealed word. **Titus 2:11-14**.

3. All people are faced with the constant choice of following God's way or the world's. **Romans 5:12, 3:19, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Ephesians 2:12, James 1:27, 2 Peter 1:4, 2:20**.

4. Satan is the "prince of this world", and has power to deceive those who are negative to God's plans. **John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:8,9**.

5. We must not love the world, **1 John 2:15-17**.

6. We must hate all the world stands for, in thought and in deed. **1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 11:30-32, Galatians 6:14, James 1:27, James 4:4, 2 Peter 1:3,4, 1 Corinthians 3:18, 19.**

7. We must not return to our old behaviour patterns, **Ephesians 2:1-7.**

8. This evil world system and the prince of this world will be condemned. **Matthew 18:7, John 12:31, 16:11, 1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 2:1ff.**

WORRY

1. General scripture for the cure to worry (**Genesis 15**).

2. Scriptures where the believer is told not to worry: (**Philippians 4:6; Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7; 1 Samuel 17:47; Exodus 14:13,14**).

3. We are instructed to be imitators of God - God never worries (**Ephesians 5:1**) When we worry we do not imitate God.

4. Three categories of worry:

a) Worry about problems of this life.

b) Worry about death and dying.

c) Worry about sin (guilt).

5. The example given is of Abram in **Genesis 15**.

6. First cure for worry - The Promises of God (v 1-7).

a) God tells Abram not to worry (v 1) -

b) "I am thy shield and thy exceeding reward.

c) The promise of a natural child is given (v 4).

d) The promises of God are backed by the perfect character of God

e) God provides an object lesson - the stars (v 5).

f) God reminds him of his salvation - a grace gift (v 6).

g) God reminds Abram of God's faithfulness in the past (v 7).

h) The challenge to Abram: trust in God or worry.

7. Second cure for worry - The Doctrine of the Word (v 8-12).

a) God instructs Abram to sacrifice five animals (v 9)

b) Animals sacrificed are:

i) HEIFER - representing CONFESSION OF SINS

ii) SHE GOAT representing SALVATION RECONCILIATION

iii) RAM representing SALVATION PROPITIATION

- iv) TURTLE DOVE representing CHRIST'S DEITY
- v) PIGEON representing CHRIST'S RESURRECTED HUMANITY.

c) Application to the cure of worry:

- i) HEIFER - by confessing your sins they are blotted out. Do not worry about past failures. Confession of sins is essential before you can apply the doctrines of the Bible to cure your worry.
- ii) SHE GOAT - God provided reconciliation through Christ by removing the barrier between God and man - we are reconciled therefore do not worry.
- iii) RAM - God was satisfied by Christ's sacrifice. Jesus Christ can handle our problems in time do not worry.
- iv) TURTLE DOVE - Jesus Christ as God is always faithful, He is always with us - do not worry.
- v) PIGEON - The resurrected Jesus Christ is seated in the place of commendation at the right hand of God in a most powerful location - do not worry.

d) Satan counter-attacks in the form of birds swooping down on the carcasses, doubts form and there is a temptation to worry (v 11).

e) Abram drives them away - he refuses to worry (v 11)

f) Under pressure, Abram begins to doubt and worry about his descendants (v 12).

8. Third cure for worry - Knowledge of prophecy

a) In our future as believers we will have:

- i) A resurrection body (**1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**).
- ii) A mansion in heaven (**John 14:1-3**)
- iii) An inheritance (**1 Peter 1:3-8**)
- iv) Blessedness and no pressure (**Revelation 21:4**)

b) God gave Abram five prophecies in (**Genesis 15**):

- i) The Jews would serve the Egyptians 400 years (v 13).
- ii) God would judge Egypt with ten plagues (v 14).
- iii) The Jews would leave with great wealth (v 14).
- iv) Abram would die at a ripe old age (v 15).
- v) The Jews would return to the Promised Land (v 16).

c) Abram therefore was assured that his descendants would have a great future and to seal this, God, that same day gave Abram the Palestinian Covenant (v 18 -21).

9. It is of interest that the number of promises inferred were five, the animals killed were five and the prophecies given were five, the number five being that of GRACE, God's unmerited favour to man.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Through the Covid years we were led to one text to encourage the saints in our local church.

It was **2 Timothy 1:7**. Let us encourage each other as we speak of death and beyond, for we do not ever speak simply of “death” as the unbelievers do, we speak of destiny through it into eternity.

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of a sound mind”.

God’s power first in the filling of the Holy Spirit every moment, then a full appreciation of God’s love and only then will our mind be stabilized in the midst of the Angelic Conflict. As we age and finally face death itself we need God’s perspective and power – nothing else will cut it.

“The Joy of the Lord is our strength”. And it is joy that goes on forever and every day is to be lived in the fullness of this principle.

Dr John C McEwan
Dean. EBCWA

Auckland, “The Ends of the Earth”, 25 April 2024.

“At the day of Doom men shall be judged according to their fruits. It will not be said then, did you believe? But were you doers or talkers only?” – John Bunyan

“When the day of recompense comes, our only regret will be that we have done so little for Him, not that we have done too much.” – George Muller

"We are like people under [a] sentence of death, waiting for the date to be set. We sense that something is about to happen. We know that things cannot go on as they are. History has reached an impasse. We are now on a collision course. Something is about to give."
- Billy Graham

“The apostolic church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death and heaven. The early Christians were looking, not for a cleft in the ground called a grave but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory.” – Alexander MacLaren

"God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realise what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right... For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side... That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realised it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last for ever."
-C.S. Lewis

"The messengers of Jesus will be hated to the end of time. They will be blamed for all the division which rend cities and homes. Jesus and his disciples will be condemned on all sides for undermining family life, and for leading the nation astray; they will be called crazy fanatics and disturbers of the peace. The disciples will be sorely tempted to desert

their Lord. But the end is also near, and they must hold on and persevere until it comes. Only he will be blessed who remains loyal to Jesus and his word until the end."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"In the end there will be people who did the work of the Lord. They were busy in the church. They had done many wonderful works. But Jesus Himself says, "I never knew you" [Matthew 7:23]." - Billy Graham

Let's be far more than "busy" as termites, but rather Holy Spirit filled believers seeking the Lord's path alone through this brief life and then on into glory. Let the confidence of heaven excite you and comfort your hearts as you advance on the path of the Lord for you each and every day.

Amen. Your brother on the pilgrimage journey through this life.

25 April 2024. John