

ID-votional Thoughts

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Good - Genesis 1:4

“And God saw the light, that it was good...” Gen. 1:4

People talk about the “good ole days.”

Well, here it is, the original good old day.

On the first day, when God made the light, the Bible certifies that “it was good.”

As a matter of fact, the second, third and each day of creation was also pronounced as being good.

Then on the sixth day God made the animals and lastly he made man, and God announced “it was very good.”

Yes, these were the “good ole days.”

The seventh day was good also.

It was the day God rested and he set for us an example and a precedent.

It is good to rest on the Sabbath.

It is good for us.

It is good for others.

It is, well, it is just good, that’s all.

Sin messed everything up.

Ever since Eve was sweet-talked and flattered into thinking everyone should take turns being God, things have been a mess.

There is little we can do to fix all the woe caused by one selfish act, but there is hope.

When each human being becomes tired of how “bad” things are they each can return to a good God who can make bad things good.

The book of Acts describes the life of Jesus (God Incarnate) as “going about doing good” Acts 10:38.

This is another example God has left for me.

If more of us “went about doing good” today we would have more “good ole days” to remember.

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American Idols - Genesis 3:5

There is no shortage of people who aspire to be as “gods” these days. Thousands line up in hopes of becoming the next or latest American idol. There is even a junior idol contest where ambitious parents offer their children as sacrifices to the celebrity “gods” on the altars of amusement. We sing, we dance; we play our way through this world (or watch those who do) never pausing to realize that the devil has gotten the whole world dancing in a graveyard. Satan tried to inspire Eve with such ambitious aspirations, and “to be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). His lyrics are a lie. Our “gods” today are surrounded by a matrix of a modern media that created them. Their illusion grows larger than life with every camera’s flash. Everyone wants to be a Millionaire. Everyone wants to be a Star. Even the Church is picking up the mantra.

We have taken our eyes off the stars that fascinated the Magi and have fixed our hearts on lower lights. The stars today are not in the heavens, but in Hollywood. They are digital rather than divine. Our “stars” never lead to a humble manger. Our graven images are painted with computer pixels and are generated by entertainment moguls who market dreams and fantasy. Their Genesis makes man in man’s image. TV and Movie screens offer up their incense of illusion and the masses are mesmerized. Our “stars” are in stadiums. Our hopes are in horse races. Our longing is in lotteries. Our faith is in our own fabrications.

Woe to the church that borrows their manners from the world or bows to a mirage. Woe to those who settle for

spotlights and lesser lights of entertainment. Satan's promise of "knowing good and evil" is today called "sophistication." For the church it is suffocation. The church that is bored with Jesus must change its tune and tries to make God dance like some minstrel for the world's amusement.

John said it well. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1Jn. 2:15-17).

id

Good Liar - Genesis 3:5b

"ye shall be as gods" Gen. 3:5b

That's a lie. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. I am sad to say that he is also a "good" liar. By that I mean, no one is better at lying than him. He has honed lying into a craft and is supreme in the art of lying. A good liar must win your trust. He must convince you that you can trust him. Is not this ironic? God is the one who deserves our trust. Faith is simply trusting God. It is at this very point that Satan is so diabolical. He gets us to believe him and trust him, and he sells us his cheap "knock-off" versions of the truth. His watches are gold plated. They look as good as solid gold and can be had for so much less. He is quick to point out that God's things "cost too much." He is so believable that millions have bought his timepieces and yet never know just how late it really is.

Satan is a liar. No one can be as God. We are dust. Yes, we are more than beast, but less than angel. God is the only one who is good. There is none good no not one. Satan may be a "good" liar, but he is not good. To be as God is to know everything, to be self-existent, to be all-powerful. To be as God is to be before all things, to be light, and life, and love. We may taste and see that the LORD is good, but even Paul said "in [us] (that is apart from God) there dwelleth no good thing."

Satan's wares are more expensive than you think. The gold plate wears off fast. His golden rings leave green bands around our fingers, and they cost too much. Even if we did not have to put any money down, he will make sure that we pay the uttermost farthing. He is a liar. When we see how much each sin costs we know we have

paid too much. There are always hidden costs, user fees, shipping charges, balloon interest payments, and the bills are in the mail.

Don't fall for his smooth talking. Stay away from his shopping cart. Run back to the Living WORD. Run back to Jesus. There may be such a thing as a "good liar," but there is no such thing as a "good lie." "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." If people knew what was "good" for them they would not give Satan's things a second look. All that glitters is not golden. The Philosopher warns us, "let the buyer beware." We would say, "let the buyer from the liar beware." Truth may cost us more now, but a lie will always cost much more later. "Buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23).

When we don't believe what someone is telling us, we say "I don't buy it." Never buy from a liar. Had the Devil been a "bad" liar Eve would never have "bought it." Satan is a "good liar." We can however believe God and buy every word He says. We must compare every word with God's Word. Jesus does not promise us we shall "be as gods." He does promise us that if we place our trust in Him we can be "children of God." There is a big difference. When we believe something is worth it, we are willing to pay. The truth may appear to cost the martyr much, but Jesus said every cup of cold water given in his name shall "have its reward." Jesus paid it all. Christ pays for everything He orders, and that's the Truth.

id

Hard Questions - Genesis 4:9

"Where is Abel thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9)

God has a way with questions. Sometimes, He will cut through all our religious pretensions and get right to the point. This was a difficult one for Cain to answer. I am sure there were a hundred other questions he would have preferred. This question is never on the comprehensive exam they give in seminary. This is a "brethren question." It is a good question for "brethren" to answer. "Where is your brother?"

There are a hundred other "brethren questions," but this the hardest. We would love to spend hours discussing "brethren principles." We meet experts who are glad to answer questions about "breaking bread," or the "clergy." Some would delight to answer questions about why they meet in a "hall" instead of a "church," or what are the differences between "membership" and "fellowship." "Where is Able, your brother?" Now, that's a hard one.

Perhaps there was a foot sticking up out of the sand somewhere that was all too obvious to those passing by. God just had to ask. Even if the body was "six feet under," the Bible says that the blood of Abel refused to be silent and was calling out. Yes, God can ask hard questions.

We often avoid the important questions by attending to the easier ones, like: Where we worship on Sunday, who has the most truth, or what kind of good vegetables we put in God's basket this week. We may even talk about our obedience to "this" or "that" of Christ's commands.

We might call everyone's attention to the "do this" of one thing that we are "doing," while God is more interested in the "that" thing which we are not.

One way the Jews got around such difficult "brethren questions" was to be very exclusive in defining just exactly "who" our brother is. Unfortunately, we have done this all too well. We have thousands of groups, sects, denominations, assemblies, and churches. "Oh, that foot sticking out of the ground?" "That one?" "I don't know Lord; I think that must be a Samaritan, or maybe an unbeliever or an infidel." Am I my brother's keeper? And, just who is my brother anyway?

The bottom line is that we are responsible to care for the welfare of each other. We are to love God with all our heart, to love the brethren, to love our neighbor as our self, and to love our enemy (I think that just about covers everyone, don't you think?). Even if we disagree about how to worship God, or are convinced that our offerings are better than theirs, God still holds us accountable for how we treat others as much as how we treat truth. Where you are in your spiritual journey is my business. By the way, where are you? How are you? Forgive me for not knowing where you are. I shall try to do a better job in answering God's important questions this year. I hope we are both closer to God this year than last (if that is possible), and should God ask us such a hard question, that we will be "ready, willing," (and as much as we are able) to answer honestly. And if we have trouble keeping Abel in our heart, may we at least do our best to keep him in our prayers.

id

Impasse - Exodus 14:2

After leaving Goshen Israel was instructed to camp by the sea.

They were not happy campers.

They complained, they murmured, they grumbled.

While they were saved by grace (that was God's part) they were not very graceful in that grace.

They told Moses that he should have "left them alone."

Were they not better off as slaves in Egypt?

I think that if there was ever an example of not being saved "by" faith but rather "through" faith, this is it.

It is God's Grace that saves us, not our faith.

And as if to prove this point, God directed the people to encamp in a spot that was impassable and a situation that was impossible.

The sea was before them, Pharaoh was behind them, and grass-less ground was beneath their cattle's feet.

They did not know where to look for help.

Certainly it was not in themselves.

They had no more confidence in Moses.

They were terrified.

They needed, as we do when in such dire circumstances, to look up. Salvation is and has always been what God does.

No matter how bad things may get in the Christian's life (look around) he may say "things are looking up."

That, of course, is where faith always looks and it is from where deliverance comes.

If you should find yourself between the Devil and the deep blue sea.

Look up and become what God wants you to be.

Faith is encamping by the sea

While Pharaoh thunders after me

A Deep wide ocean blocks the way

Faith kneels down in the sand to pray

God, and God alone must save the Day

Leave Me Alone! - Exodus 14:12

“Leave us alone.”

Ex.14:12

Most people think they want to be “left alone.”

That is the way the Hebrews felt when they were slaves in Egypt.

People can get used to anything.

Even believers like things pretty much as they are.

We want to be comfortable.

We don't want to be bothered.

Well, the job of a good preacher is to refuse to “leave people alone.”

“Woe unto them,” said Amos “who are at ease at Zion.”

Church pews are easy-chairs, and once seated, the saints get pretty much “set in their ways.”

The problem with that is the Christian life is a “walk” not a “sit.”

Again and again God sent his messengers to remind people that life is a journey and a journey means things will change.

If the scenery does not change it's because you are not going anywhere.

We are to encourage, challenge, exhort, help, and sometimes even rebuke, but we are not to leave each other alone.

When the Glory Cloud moved in the wilderness the people had to follow.

Tent pegs must be deep enough, but not too deep.

Spiritual growth means change.

Some people think holiness means staying and living in the past. The Bee hive hair-do, or polyester pants suits might have been the rage when you got saved, but they have absolutely nothing to do with salvation or godliness.

Some people are stuck in a spiritual rut and they don't want to get out.

Good ministry will not leave people alone.

A good minister sows good seed, but is not satisfied until there is a harvest, fruit and more fruit.

When Jesus encountered a unclean (bad) spirit in Mark 1:24 that spirit used the same words as the sorry saints in Exodus "Leave us alone."

I am glad God did not let us alone.

id

Cry Baby - Exodus 14:15

"And the LORD said unto Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" Ex. 14:15

Don't be a cry baby. Not often does God scold us for praying. But He does warn us about vain repetition which should be avoided at all cost (Matt. 6:7). It is a failure of faith that fails to go forward when God has given us marching orders. A friend summed up a victorious Christian life this way, when asked why he carried his Bible to the church meeting and what they did at their meeting. He said, "first we're going to read it, next we're going to pray about it, then we're going to do it." What a dynamic description of a triumphant Christian life this is. Problem with many of us is we read it, pray about it, pray about it, pray about it, and pray about it again. We are like the needle caught in the scratch of an old phonograph record. Sometimes we need someone to give us a jolt. The Christian life is a song ("and they sang a new song, saying thou art worthy..."), we all too often fail to sing it.

There is a time to study. There is a time to pray. There is a time to stop praying and start doing. If you seem to be stuck, don't cry (wherefore criest thou unto me?) rather try, try doing the thing God has asked you to do. Go forward. Watch the waters open.

id

Da Kingdumb - 1 Samuel 8:5

There is a big difference between a Kingdom and a Kingdumb. Saul was the head of a Kingdumb. The Prophet Samuel could not persuade Israel that having a mortal King was not in their best interests. God would gladly be their King, but they were not interested. They needed to hear what Jesus told Nicodemus, "that which is flesh is flesh, and that which is spirit is spirit." There is a spiritual "Kingdom," and then there is a "Kingdumb." "now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.... that we also may be like all the other nations." 1Sam. 8:5;8:20).

Even though it was not a good idea, God allowed Israel to proceed with their plans. There are some things that we will never learn unless we learn the hard way. Samuel felt rejected. God reminds us that as God's servants we should not take rejection personally. God said, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me."

Providence brought Saul the son of Kish to Samuel. Saul had no idea who Samuel was. He might have been one of the few in Israel who had not heard about Hannah's Son. Don't expect to be an eagle if you hang around turkeys. Saul raised asses for a living. Be careful. "He that walketh with wise men will be wise, but a companion of fools will be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20). It might be pointed out here that David worked with sheep and Saul worked with jack asses or donkeys. As these animals have a different "temperment" so they are handled differently. Israel needs a shepherd. God would find one in David, and David's spiritual temperament led

him to proclaim what Samuel understood all along, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Saul, at best was "goodly" (1Sam. 10:2). There is big difference between being "goodly" and being godly. One is spirit and one is flesh. One results in finding the Kingdom and the other (unless God steps in) in only finding a Kingdumb.

id

Goliath's Sword - 1 Samuel 21:9

"There is none like that" 1Sam 21:9

Perhaps it was an attempt to lay his hands on the memory of a better day. Perhaps it was a reaching for an old testimony from the past when none was near today. Perhaps it was just the glint of steel. David's fear took charge of faith when he reached for the Giant's sword, forged in a Philistine furnace.

Who among us, in moments of fear and in attempts to "defend" ourselves, has not reached for baser and more carnal weapons?

It is always better to be led by our faith than driven by our fears. Fear is the goal of the world's oldest terrorist, Satan. Woe to the man or nation who allows fear to drive him away from a simple faith in God. That is what happened to David. There was a time when he was filled with a "child-like" faith that could descend into the valley of the Shadow of Death and face Goliath. He did so, to the amazement of Israel's army, sword-less, armor-less, and fearless. Goliath had both sword and spear as well as someone designated to carry his shield. God was David's shield. Goliath did not stand a chance against the Almighty. When David faced off with evil he was not alone. Later he would write, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Unfortunately, as it is with most of us, at times we are in danger of forgetting our faith and following our fears. There was a day when God was more real to David than Goliath. Now, as he is dodging Saul's wrath, his faith begins to fail. God had long since left Saul to his own

devices. His heart was like an old rusty oil tanker breaking up after running aground. The contents of his dark disposition covered everything around him like a toxic oil slick blackening everything it touched. We either bless those around us with grace, or we leave a spiritual slick of crude oil on all we touch. If we are not filled with the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc), we may become like tankers filled with things more toxic.

Fear took over. David began (with the best of intentions) to devise and scheme with Jonathan about the best way to live with Saul and survive. They came up with plan "A" and with Plan "B." If one thing did not work, they would try another. So it is when we are afraid and trying to defend ourselves. As David's fears increase, he resorts to deception, half-truths, and out right lying. David became spiritually ill. Fear like some kind of spiritual influenza sends a chill racing through his body and brings a fever that clouds his reason. He flees to the tabernacle, but not to pray, not to worship. He lies to the priest and seeks a weapon. When we are afraid, any sword will do. Sure enough, there was a sword in the temple. It was Goliath's sword, a trophy left from a better day. David says, "there is none like that, give it to me."

Now this is a most pitiful sight. He who once refused to wear Saul's armor and carry Saul's sword to fight the Philistine, now wears the very weapon that was worthless to the infidel before the name of the Almighty. Then to make matters worse, with the sword dragging in the dirt (no doubt, for it was large and heavy) David enters the city of Gath and changed his behavior, feigning to be a mad man.

Woe to us when fear replaces faith and we strap on the weapons of the world, change our behavior, and pretend to be a Philistine in order to be saved, succeed, or be successful. Woe to the church that reaches for the carnal weapons of worldliness in order to live another day. Woe to the believer who thinks he has to fight the Lord's battles and then behaves like a mad man in the process.

The saint has access to a better sword. It was true that there was none like Goliath's sword, but it was more true of God's sword. No saint is weaponless who has the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. That which is flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. As a believer, I have access to the light saber of God's eternal Word. No evil can stand against it. There is none like it in sharpness or in glory. Sad is the church which reaches for a lesser weapon.

Thank God that David comes to his senses. The fever breaks, so to speak, and his faith recovers. Yes, he finds himself in a cave, but better alone in a cave with God than sitting with many in the seat of the scornful. David will fight again another day, but when he emerges from the cave he remembers, that "the Battle is the Lord's."

id

Can You Hear Me? - 1 Samuel 28:6

“The LORD answered him not.” (1Sam. 28:6)

Saul was trying to reach God and nothing worked. I cannot think of anything more horrible. If God is the Word, nothing in this life is more serious than silence. The first time the astronauts circled the moon controllers had to endure a awful period of silence and a black-out of radio transmission. The moon itself came between those men and all that were on earth. Thankfully, the silence was broken and communications restored. When the heavens are silent it is worse than being on the dark side of the moon. I can think of nothing more awful than God not speaking to me. I must remain on speaking terms. Those terms are clear. With sin communications with God is in danger of breaking up and breaking off. “Adam, where art thou?” Even Adam was not as pitiful as Saul. At least God was calling Adam. Saul met with an awful silence. Nothing worked. He could not find God in prayer, in dreams, in Urim, nor by prophet. Silence.

I said I cannot think of anything worse than God not speaking to me, however there is one thing that comes in second in its sadness, that is God speaking to me, and I not listening. This lesser sadness is only a hairs breath from the greater. God looks for us and calls out to us from the garden of the Old and New Testament each morning, in the cool of the day and if we are not there, how dangerous. I would much rather have God’s violence than His silence.

Isaiah described the spiritual “bad connection” in great detail. “The Lord’s hand is not shortened that He cannot

save, nor His ear heavy that He cannot hear, but you iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." It is not that He "cannot," but He "will not." When Jesus stood before Herod and was pelted with questions, the Bible says that our Lord "answered him nothing" (Lk. 23:9). In the commercial, the customer of a certain phone company keeps asking (from the remotest places) "can you hear me now?" The idea is perfect communication is possible no matter where you are. Not so in the spiritual world. Psalm 66:18 is in the instruction manual. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Leave the province of God's will, enter areas of sin, walk in the "dark" rather than in the "light," and the answer to the "can you hear me now?" might be just silence. May we make sure that nothing ever comes between heaven and our heart.

id

Recovered - Psalms 32:1

I've got you covered. That is what you want to hear if you are in a fire fight, and you need to make a mad dash in front of an enemy position. "I've got you covered" is what you want to hear when you call your insurance broker after an accident or a hurricane. "I've got you covered," is what you want to hear when an emergency has called you away from important work that must continue, and someone steps in for you. These words are words of encouragement.

There is such a thing as the covering of God's grace and being under His feathers. It is wonderful to hear God say, "Don't worry, I've got you covered." Then there is the matter of your sin. We really need God here. There is so much to cover. The Bible says that Love covers a multitude of sins. If this is true, God's Love must be enormous. Isaiah describes a man trying to sleep in a bed that is too short and to cover himself with a blanket that is too narrow (Isa. 28:20). Those kinds of nights are very long nights. God's Grace is large and wide enough to cover us.

The lesson is simple. We cannot cover our sins. Job said "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom" then I am wrong. (Job 31:33). Proverbs warns "he that covereth his sins will not prosper (Prov. 28:13). Our sins must be dealt with, but we can do nothing ourselves. We must not attempt to cover them up or hide them. We must confess them. Then and only then God wraps his grace around us and the Blood of Christ shields us. When we were born we were uncovered (Ps. 139:13). Someone needed to cover

us. When we were born, we were all born sinners. Again, someone needed to cover us. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:7). It is as if we hear God say, "I've got you covered."

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When Good Came Down - Psalms 36:5-7

"Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

How excellent is thy loving - kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

Ps 36:5,6,7)

God's mercy is as great as the heavens.

God's mercy is as large as man's longing eye can see.

The stores of Grace are as large as space and God's love as large as he.

These verses leave us breathless.

God is so great.

His faithfulness also defies all attempts to measure it.

It reaches "unto the clouds."

His righteousness is as the highest mountain and his judgments deeper than the sea.

This picture of God's greatness is greater still for it captures a largeness in a little word that describes the Almighty.

God is kind.

One may love from "afar," but in order to be kind we
much come close.

To be kind to someone we must touch them.

Two thousand years ago,

God came down, and good came down and was Kind.

id

Watch Your Step Please - Psalm 37:23

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."

God files the flight plan.

God sets the course.

God knows the way.

God knows the best way.

When Israel left Egypt God chose the route.

It was "Not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near..." Ex. 13:17.

When we catch up to God's people again in chapter 14 they are afraid.

They said to Moses, in effect, "this is not the way."

It must have been hard for this reluctant leader to listen to a million people tell him that he was wrong.

Today the church is so worldly that it seems they have never left Egypt and many of those who have have gone the way of the Philistines, because it is near.

Moses must listen to one voice.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.

The problem with the direction in the Exodus was not the "lay of the land" as much as the "way of the land."

Going north east would have been a "short cut" to the promised land.

God took them through the wilderness.

There are no "short cuts" to God's Kingdom.

We are called to Do Right and then no matter what the
result of doing right, we should "delight,"

because it is God's way.

It's not just words or the way we talk

What matters most is the way we walk

And it would be best for friend and brother

If our lips don't go one way id

Panting - Psalm 42:1

The word is the water that fills the spiritual wells from which faith must drink. I almost said "may" drink, but that would suggest that faith had a choice. It does not. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." It cannot survive without this special water.

If the hart does not find water, it will die.

The just shall live by faith and faith cannot live without this most important element, the Word.

As the hart pants after the brook, the heart must pant after the Book.

When Cherith runs dry we must set off to Zarepath.
When the heavens withhold the rain and brooks cease to bubble and babble over the rocks we must bow and pray.
The panting prayer of a thirsty soul will not go unheard.

Dry sermons, dry churches and dry preachers parch the soul, rather than refresh it.

Jesus had a physical need. He was never found in need spiritually. He is God and, while on earth, was filled with the Spirit. Woe to the man who must ask another to "give me to drink" (Jn. 4:7), when the water needed is spiritual.

Woe to the saint who must rely on some sinner to lead him to the water.

While we enjoy gifted men who have long cords which they use to draw when the wells are "deep," woe to the heart that cannot find God's word and God's brook.

Look for the Shepherd.

He will lead you "beside still waters."

Pant as you follow and then lift your cupped hands to
your lips that faith may drink full of God's living water.

Unless you pant

I'm afraid you can't ever find that brook

For as the hart shall do it's part

Faith must find

God's Book id

Do Me a Favor - Psalm 44:3

Who has not used these four words? Everyone understands them. It is the voice of humility. We must humble ourselves in order to ask for a favor. It is the other side of grace. Do me a favor. Grace is not something deserved, earned, or merited. It is a favor. The Psalmist says it this way: "For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them" (Ps. 44:3). There are different ways to look at this word "favor." Some translations say "thou favored them." This is true, but please, don't reduce grace to being the "teacher's pet." Favor held in the wrong hands, is a gold coin which quickly turns to lead. To think that "I am favored" is not the same as thinking that God has done for me a great and unmerited favor. This is not "hair-splitting," it is dividing the proud from the humble. The Syro-Phoenician woman understood this grace. She understood that being the object of favor is not what most understand as being "picked," "chosen," or favored over others. Unless it is held in a humble hand, this cup of milk will curdle. One spirit leads to life and the other to death.

"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up." Please, you do me a favor? It is often here that the theologians weigh in. "We do not even have to ask for grace," they say. It is as if the "asking" preempts the sovereignty of God or something. It is true that we receive grace everyday without asking. We do not have to ask for grace. But when it comes to salvation, when it

comes to the forgiveness of sins, when it comes to finding the Prodigal's pardon, God is just waiting for you. He is waiting as a Father waits for the Prodigal. The Elder son never left home but he was more sour buttermilk. He did not appreciate or understand grace. How do you explain grace? It is a favor. Yes, He did me a big favor.

id

Graduate with Honors - Psalms 49:20

“Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” Ps. 49:20

We are here to think, to understand, and hopefully, to learn. The “honor” mentioned here is artificial and temporary. It is conferred in and for time, but not for eternity. The honor here is the one that is mounted on the wall in your office and received at the college commencement ceremony. People call you “doctor.” The honor here is the trail of abbreviations that follow your name as accolades to your accomplishments. They are jewelry that will be removed by the eternal mortician or angel that shall prepare you for the judgment.

As the nurse asks you to remove even your wedding band before you go into surgery along with any other artificial implements upon your person, so all “man-conferred” honors will be left behind when we leave this place.

The words “your honor” will be left behind when the judge goes to stand before the Judge of Judges. There will be no Reverends in the rapture. There will be no “your majesty” except God’s Majesty.

Psalm 49 describes how death will level the playing field and how death is a portal, and like Jesus’ eye of the needle, it will require us to squeeze through a another birth cannal with nothing but our nakedness. All riches, glory, and honor are left for others. The wise man will prepare his faith and his character for eternity. Life, said Jesus, is not in what we have (abundance of things), but in what we are. The title before or after our name may

be what sinful men think of us, but the only thing of value on that great day is what God thinks of us. How much I made or did not make of this life will be measured by how much I made of Him. Oh, you didn't think of Him today? Think again.

id

Secret Place - Psalm 91:1

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Ps. 91:1

If there is such a “place” I want to find it, this “secret place of the Most High.” I want to know its longitude and its latitude. Job once lamented that he could not find it (Job. 23:3). One moment it is at Bethel that we find the “gates of heaven, but like the manna of the wilderness, when we come back again it is no longer there. Is it in Bethlehem? Then we will head off with the wise men and knock at the door of the inn, but the manger is now empty. John “outran” Peter to the sepulcher, but they did not find him there either.

Upon every place Jesus was said to ever walk, sit, or pray, some religious franchise will lease the spot, erect a chapel, and charge admission. Or some entrepreneur will set up a card or souvenir shop right in front of it. For that reason, if you find the “secret place” it is best to keep it secret.

“Job, there is such a place.” Jesus talked about it. He called it a closet. It is the place large enough for only you and God. It is a place of communion, and quiet, and as the hushed Sea of Galilee after the Lord’s rebuke, it is a place of great calm.

It is the place where worries wilt, wars cease, and worship is the very air you breathe. It is the place where wounds heal, and saints kneel in order to find the feet of God. The secret place is where the surrendered soul is held up to God like a living sacrifice, and the light of heaven dances in the folds, joints, and marrow of a

transparent and open heart. It is where the lost Urim and Thummim may be found. It is where the daily treasure of God's will and grace for each and every day is discovered. While what goes on there is secret, the results are open and evident to all. (Mt. 6:6).

id

Fire and Ice - Psalm 148:8

Everything was made for God's pleasure. Everything was made to praise the LORD. This is one of the first things we learn when we come to faith. A song bubbles up from somewhere deep within us and explodes with praise when it breaks the surface. God inhabits praise.

We alone of things on earth have the ability to withhold our praise and when we do we choke the very reason for our being. Psalm 148 is a call to praise. More sacred than Mid-Eastern calls to prayer from ancient minarets, the call to praise makes us remember why we were made.

Fire, hail, snow, and vapor, and stormy wind (Ps. 148:8) were also made to praise God, and were made for His pleasure. While it may be hard for us to appreciate how God could find pleasure in the praise of these lesser things, the Scripture says that it is so. The next time you witness a veil of vapor caressing a mountain or hanging low like lace in a valley know that all things were made by Him and for Him. The next time you hear the rain splatter against the roof, or the wind whistle through the trees join in the chorus of praise. In some way that we shall never know, God finds pleasure in the jasper stone, and in the sapphire, and in every single soul. The Bible says so.

The Son of God, more brilliant and beautiful than any other, called by Mary that "Holy Thing," said it better than all: "I always do those things that please Him." Let everything that has breath -- no better still-- let "everything" praise Him.

id

Straight Face - Proverbs 17:22

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” Prov. 17:22

There are three theories about what makes us laugh. There is the superiority theory suggested by Plato, the incongruity theory, and the relief theory suggested by Freud. Laughter is a mystery. Laughter is an emotional and psychological reflex that God has downloaded with our original software. Animals don't laugh. They might screech, or yelp or even jump up and down in their cage while they stick their tongue out at us, but they can't appreciate a good joke like we can. “A priest and a rabbi go fishing(already we are amused), a monkey will not get it. God made us with the ability to laugh. Laughter, (a merry heart) is good medicine. I am not sure why religious people are so grumpy, especially the extremists. I am also not sure if God finds them amusing or not; I don't. Sour saints don't belong in heaven. They would ruin the neighborhood.

What is it about those huge clown shoes that makes children laugh? What is it about the Coyote trying to drop an anvil on a roadrunner's head that puts us in “stitches.” Perhaps it is the stupidity of Coyote matched with the unaware detachment of a little bird-brain, who knows.

The word “humorous” comes from the Latin word “humid,” which means “moist.” Some people are too dry. There is just something wonderful and therapeutic about laughing until we cry. Perhaps humor is some sort of parallel universe to one of heart-ache into which we occasionally cross, and then not often enough.

Life is no joke. Life is serious. There are many things that are “no laughing matter.” But life is also balanced. All sun a desert makes, and all rain would drown us all. He who is “always fooling around,” is a fool, and that’s not funny. Having said all that, I think God made us with the ability to laugh for a reason. Every Abraham needs his Isaac. We should pray every day and brush out teeth every day. We should also laugh every day.

All this brings me to the question of whether or not God ever laughs. I don’t mean getting the last laugh kind of laughter, I mean the humorous variety, the belly laugh variety, or the tears rolling down the cheek variety. This kind of talk is enough to make a Pharisee furious. How dare you think such thoughts about God. I cannot help it. I cannot think that the God who designed the sense of smell, never experienced the pleasure of smelling a rose or a lilac, or the God who designed the mechanics of the inner ear never heard, felt and enjoyed the rhapsody of the Halleluiahs Chorus. It is equally inconceivable to me, that the God who can see everything, could see what I see in the mirror every morning and not laugh out loud.

id

Treasure - Isaiah 33:6

"The fear of the LORD is his treasure." (Isa. 33:6)

Gold is no substitute for God. Isaiah writes of the righteous, "the fear of the LORD is his treasure." This fear is simply the other side of genuine faith. The early church understood what real riches were. The early church understood the economics of eternal things, and traded in the currency of consecrated stocks and bonds. Those stocks were often in prisons and the bonds in persecution, but they found God's grace sufficient. The apostle's purse may not have held much silver and gold, but the church was rich in God. A widow's mite can easily balance the books, and make a ministry mighty. And any saint worth his salt, knows where the hidden treasure is. It is hid in God. (Lk. 12:21)

The fear of the LORD is his treasure. Moses must have looked the part of a fool to those who watched him throw away the treasures of Egypt, but Moses endured as seeing him who was invisible. He esteemed the riches of Christ more precious.

By all accounts, Job was wealthy as well. His wealth was not in camels nor his substance in his seven thousand sheep. His real wealth was in the vaults of eternity, he "feared God, and eschewed evil." The fear of the LORD was his treasure. No evil could rob Job of his real riches. Although every temporal thing was stripped away and he, in his mortality, was reduced to what all who watched might call "ruin," Job still had an eternal Trust Fund that remained intact. He was rich toward God. The fear of the Lord is our treasure.

id

Through and Through - Isaiah 43:2

Things will get better. As a believer, I am sure of it. No matter how bad things are, or how bad thing may become, I have God's word on it that things are going to get better. Jesus said "I go to prepare a place for you." I believe Him. Jesus spoke of the "Father's house." Yes, things are going to get better. Even if in this world I become homeless, I know that I am just not home yet. One day I will step up on the front porch of eternal proportions and then at last I will be home. No matter how difficult things become here, I am encouraged by the word "through."

There is through and then there is through. They sound the same, but they are very different. The first word reminds me that life here is a journey. God said "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." Isaiah did not say "If thou passest through," but "when." This means that on my way home, I am going to have to go through some things. It means that even when I am going through what I must go through, I am not there yet. Then there is the second word and it means finished. The Lord Jesus understood what that meant and He used it at the end of His ordeal. "It is finished," He said while on the cross. Every true Christian can expect a cross. There is no other way to conquer a river except to cross it.

One time the Lord Jesus said "I must needs go through Samaria." Going "to" Samaria is not the same as going "through" Samaria. It is in the going through that we do some of our greatest work and "well doing." Paul said, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we

shall reap if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Never was there a better example of "Well doing" than there was on that day at Jacob's Well; and never was there a better day for Sychar than the day that Jesus was there. The Samaritans would have never tasted that living water if Jesus had not gone "through" Samaria.

Some of us are going "through" some stuff right now that will be an important part of our testimony. There cannot be a "testimony" without a "test." David said "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." There is no other way to get from one mountain top to another without descending into some valley. But even at the lowest point, we realize that we are not "through," and God is not through with us yet. We also know that, no matter how dark the shadows in the valley, when we are through, things will be brighter and better because "through" is not the destination. It's just the way home.

id

Foot - Isaiah 60:13

I will make the place of my feet glorious. (Isa. 60:13).

Jesus is the head, and this is Headship.

However, we show that we understand headship by finding a place at his feet.

“I will make the place of my feet glorious.”

Too many times we want to push our way into the boardroom of God’s corporation wanting to find out what God plans to do.

We want to sit at the conference table more than at the communion table.

In the church we want to be at the head more than at the feet.

He said, “I will make the place of my feet glorious.”

We disciples get into the most trouble when we hover too high and try to influence the plans of God.

We come with our five-year and ten- year plans and roll them out before the Almighty like so many blueprints to a housing project, and then press him even with our prayers. How much better to believe that He already has plans for us, how much better to find a place at his feet, and wait on him to speak. The place of his feet is glorious.

Mary knew it was so.

That is where we often find her (Lk. 10:39).

Martha was fuming in the kitchen trying to make Christ’s supper.

May I begin each day at his feet and trust that the head knows what it is doing.

“I will make the place of my feet glorious.”

id

Google - Jeremiah 29:13

"And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye search for me with all your heart." Jer. 29:13

Find God. The goal in life is to find God, not once, but every day. We are born lost. We are all born outside the garden. It is our job to find our way back home. Sad are those who are satisfied with where they are. The truth is, as long as we are in this world, we are not home yet. Now I am not talking about heaven. I am not talking about the "sweet bye and bye" sung about by those who think they found the truth. I am talking about the journey, the journey home. The moment a person thinks they found it, they are likely to lose it, to stop; and we can't stop.

Jesus said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." None of these things are solid, stagnant, or freeze framed. They are all moving, pulsing, and living things. No one has the truth any more than learning a couple of axioms in geometry class makes you a math genius. After basic arithmetic, comes algebra I and then algebra II, and then geometry, calculus and so on. I am afraid that many who claim to have "found" the truth have camped out in kindergarten. Meeting the Teacher is a long way from getting your PhD.

I am afraid that much of what passes for Christianity today is just children fussing and playing in pre-school. Many having found "it" are afraid to be promoted. Many are happy with the swings and sliding ponds, or jump ropes of a specific school or denomination. The religious authorities were upset with Jesus because when they "piped" He did not dance. He was not interested in

playing their religious games. The Pharisees thought they found it and had it. They had arrived. Jesus said our righteousness must exceed theirs, and that did not mean making more rules, or discovering the right rule. The Scribe and the Pharisee were experts in the Word and the Law. One was an expert in writing it, and the other was an expert in enforcing it. Jesus calls our attention to the spirit of the Word, because the Word is a living thing.

Our mission, goal and purpose in life is to find God every day both in the word and in the world. He can only be found by those who search for Him with all their heart. This cannot be done by good scribal or religious penmanship, it can only be done in spirit.

We must find Him in His written Word. We must meet with Him, worship Him and learn of and from Him. We must find Him (or His angel or attendant or messenger) in among the multitude of our crowded life. Finding someone among the thirsty, or lonely, or afraid, or sick is our assignment for the day. Since we cannot be sure which one is the One who might one day say, "I was thirsty and ye gave me not to drink," we give to as many as we can as if we were giving to Him, and treat everyone with kindness, care, compassion and respect.

"Ye shall seek me...." The only search engine that will work for this assignment is a humble heart. Jesus said "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Nothing less will work. The Omnipresent is in the present, and our job is to find Him and His will every day and in every circumstance. He is here, He is there, He is near, as we shall see when we would only search for Him with all our heart.

id

Pardon - Micah 7:18

Who is a pardoning God like He? (Micah 7:18)

All my sins are dead and buried. They died along with the thieves that died with Jesus on Calvary. But all my sins must be nailed to Christ's cross, and His alone. My sins, every ugly one, from the sensual to seditious, all were there nailed to the cross. Each one caused pain and each one caused shame as sin is always known to do, but they died with Christ and were buried with Him.

Where Moses is buried no one knows; and no one but God alone knows the place (somewhere far away, as far as the east is from the west, some place in the deepest part of the sea) where my sins have been dumped and buried. The early American Shakers refused to mark their graves. They reasoned that the corpse is not the person, and the person is no longer here. We need no other marker for our dead and buried sins than that the cross of Christ.

Satan watched us sin and gladly held our coats as we stoned Stephen along with truth and reason. Satan would love to dig up the graves and dump the rotting corpses at our feet. At best he can parade our bad memories before our minds in chains while suggesting we crucify ourselves again and again. Real faith is not so easily fooled by phantoms and quickly points to a Savior who "once suffered for sins." To think that is not enough is to insult God and insinuate that we assist the Almighty or must by acts of penance add some sales tax to the price that has already been paid.

We don't know where our sins are, but we do know where our Savior is. He is risen. He is on high. He is lifted up and at the Father's right hand, and He is in our heart. Like Zaccheus, we will pay four-fold and ask forgiveness to those that sin has wronged (if we can), but we will not drape our soul in crape for Christ indeed is risen and in Him (although unworthy) we find ourselves forgiven.

"He will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Mic. 7:19).

id

Where is He? - Matthew 2:2

"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Matt. 2:2

There are two great goals of life. These and all truly wise men have taken them as their great ambition. First we must find him. Then we must mind him. The magi followed the star over great distances on a quest driven by the question: WHERE? Where is the king?

Although Herod looked like a king, and even held the title "King of the Jews," the wise men knew better.

They were looking for more.

Most are satisfied when fooled by the Herods of this world.

We often settle for something less than God.

Their quest was to find him.

Finding him is only the first part. First we must find him, then we must mind him. Herod wanted to find him (2:8), but he was certainly not willing to mind him.

Many will open their Bibles, attend church services, and listen to sermons who will not find him. because God knows they will not mind him. Trust and Obey today.

If thy light shall lead the way

And guide me to thy Son

Then I shall bow my head and pray

In me thy will be done

You Had to be There - Matthew 2:8

"bring me word again,"

Matt. 2:8

There is no guarantee that God will send word again if we fail to respond properly the first time we hear it.

That is why the Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart." Faith lays hold of God's Word and clings to it, bows before it, obeys it.

Two men are found waiting in Matthew two for word.

One was waiting in vain.

God would never speak to Herod "again."

We must not handle the word of God deceitfully (2Cor. 4:2).

Herod said he wanted to worship (2:8), but in fact he wanted to destroy (2:13).

God knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. If, after hearing the word of God once, we do not believe it and bow before it, there is no guarantee that we will ever hear it again in this lifetime.

Joseph, on the other hand was in Egypt also waiting for word from God.

An angel had instructed him to take his family and the babe and be there "until I bring thee word" (Matt. 2:13).

"Be there."

When God points out to us some place, principle, or promise faith must take us there.

We must "be there."

We must obey or when God sends word to Egypt we will not be there to receive it.

Disobedience is not only not an option, it may become the dead end for faith.

We must follow God's word whether it sends us to Bethlehem or Egypt, we must set out on a spiritual journey to "be there until [he] brings [us] word."

Table Talk - Matthew 5:6

Mt. 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness....”

The Hebrew children lusted for the flesh pots of Egypt. They thought about them, they dreamed about them, they continually talked about them. “Oh, remember the fish?” one would say. Another, “Ah, the garlic..” They began to complain. All they had was God and God was not enough. Jesus would later say, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.” God’s principles are timeless.

The God who can change stones into bread can supply all our needs. Even the Manna became “old” quickly for those who missed Egypt more than they loved God. Even though it came “fresh” every morning, Israel became bored with its breakfast. They wanted meat. They wanted flesh. They wanted something they could chew. God sent them quails, piles and pails of quails.

I remember what a treat getting ice cream was as a child. My mother pinched pennies. A quart or block of ice cream was divided up among five. The pieces were small, but I never tasted better ice cream. That August day in 1950 was ice cream nirvana. It was the gold standard by which all other ice cream experiences would be measured by me, and nothing has ever come close. Years later, prosperity brought more ice cream but none better. As a teenager I took a job as a counter clerk at an ice cream stand. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. During my break I was given permission to make and eat anything I wanted, and let me tell you,

that first week, “I wanted.” The first week was wonderful. That soon changed. I had had enough. By the time I left Mr. Gillan’s employment, I seldom ate ice cream.

Israel was excited at the sight of quails in Exodus 16 and Numbers 11. They ate the birds until they were “coming out of their noses.” Too much of anything in this world will make you sick. The people got sick. The world will also spoil our appetite for God. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” This spiritual hunger is the reverse of physical hunger. The less we have of God, the less we want. The more we have of Him the more we hunger for Him. The more we snack on the world between meals, the less we care for heaven.

However even with God, we are not to live just to eat, but eat to live, and there is a difference. If we never push ourselves away from the well-laden table and work in the vineyard, soon we may be big, but not any better. May we never forget that we are saved to serve. When we have spent ourselves in His service, when we have burned the fuel called faith in His fields, when we have worked the works of Him that sent us, then what a welcome sight will be His Table.

-id

Close Second - Matthew 6:14-15

I cannot think of a greater need for sinners than to have (and know) the forgiveness of God.

Man's greatest problem is sin.

No problem is greater, none.

David needed it, and David knew it.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1).

David was so blessed.

Paul quotes this wonderful truth in Romans 4.

Paul was blessed as well. It is wonderful to know that our sins are forgiven.

We find forgiveness only in Christ, and only at the cross.

It is the intersection where truth and mercy met in time and make a way for all eternity (Ps. 85).

There, at that crossroad of the cross grace took my place and Jesus died in my stead.

I am still sobered at the sight.

My greatest need was met at Calvary.

As the greatest commandment (Love God) is followed by a second (love man) the first and greatest need is followed by a second.

If the first and greatest need is forgiveness, then our second greatest need is to forgive.

Men have as much trouble with the second as they do with the first.

I think however, the proof of the one is evidenced in the other.

Jesus told a story of a man who after experiencing the forgiveness of a debt grabbed another man by the throat and demanded payment for a much lesser debt.

This behavior was so outrageous that the ungrateful man was thrown into prison.

There are many who claim they have been to Calvary and yet they are quick to seize, by the throat, any who “owe” them a debt, or apology.

The forgiveness of Salvation is so large and their willingness to forgive so little, one must wonder if they have ever discovered how great a debtor they were or are.

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matt. 6:14-15.

Faith is required to see the second need as much as the first.

When we see ourselves as hell deserving sinners pardoned (like some Barabbas) at the eleventh hour, we could hardly believe it.

Never for a moment did we think we were worthy, but on the basis of Christ’s word, we knew were saved.

Likewise, it is only the grace we found at the cross that prepares us to pass through a world filled with other sinners who will sin against us and we against others.

Real faith trusts the God of grace to be our shield and defender.

Only God can forgive sin. Only the blood of Christ can blot out our transgressions. We must forgive because we are forgiven. Some smart person thought to put an eraser on the other end of a pencil. One side is for our "writes," the other is for our wrongs. If someone wrongs me grace must turn my face, and grace alone can do it. Strike a saint on the right cheek (Matt. 6:39) he will turn the other also.

The world will not know peace until it knows forgiveness.

First it must know the forgiveness and grace of God that can only come by Jesus Christ, then it must know that that very same grace supernaturally shall enable us to forgive.

First comes peace with God, then the peace of God. Without Christ there will never be peace in this world.

The war in Afghanistan will go on forever because men cannot forgive.

The war in

Palestine will go on until the second coming because men cannot forgive.

The war in men's hearts will go on because men will not forgive.

In the very answer to our greatest need God has provided the secret of the second.

Mountains vs. Mustard Seeds - Matthew 17:20

The Lord Jesus used the largest and smallest things the disciples knew to teach them about the awesome power of faith. Nothing was smaller in the age before bifocals and magnifying glasses than a mustard seed. And nothing was bigger than a mountain. Mountains of Transfiguration, or the Mountains of Sinai, or the Mountains of Ararat, tower over the earth. Mountains, however said Jesus, are no match for the most miniscule amount of genuine and authentic faith. Just a little bit of the stuff can move the earth, snow-capped peaks and all. The disciples failed to understand or appreciate the secret of faith which had just been illustrated at the summit. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Jesus met with Moses and Elijah.

Peter, James and John were there too, but they missed the mark when it came to grasping the significance of the event. Luke speaks of the slumber party on the slopes. The Bible says they were “heavy with sleep.” The disciples almost missed the whole thing. Even still, many of us are only half awake when we read God’s Word and are in danger of missing the meaning. To miss the meaning is to miss the whole thing. Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about His “decease.” Moses was the Law, Elijah was the Prophets. That is what both of them have spoken about ever since they learned to talk. Christ, the Incarnate Word of God came to fulfill and do the Word of God. The Lord Jesus came to die for our sins. Everything must be according to the Word. The Gospel itself is that “Christ died for our sins according

to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Faith is simply to believe God's Word. This is why the Father said on the mount, "This is my beloved Son....hear Him."

The idea is that a mountain can not stay still if God's Word says "move." It does not have a chance. We can trust God's Word. In the tenth chapter, Matthew records the Words "ye shall cast out demons." It will be so. Yes, but not without faith. Even faith must be purified and refined by prayer and fasting if it is to separate the dross of doubt.

Demons and mountains have a way of intimidating us. One seems as large and as impossible to move as the other. In the spirit world of faith, mountains are no match for mustard seeds and with faith "nothing," said Jesus "shall be impossible unto you."

id

The Power of Forgiveness - Matthew 18:21

“How often shall I forgive?” (Mt. 18:21)

Forgiveness is a spiritual feat. Forgiveness is grace. Grace cannot be hoarded, stowed away, or home grown. Grace has one fountain and that fountain is somewhere in the heart of God. In forgiveness we become a channel, a riverbed, a wadi, through which the goodness of God runs down, gurgling, bubbling, and springing up with living water to irrigate parched earth. Without forgiveness life becomes an arid desert in which nothing good grows. Therefore, I must forgive. I must allow God’s living water to pour down and pour in, covering the rocks and stones of a hundred hurts, covering them as only grace can if there is any hope for the land to become green again.

A wounded spirit is more likely (in flesh) to call down fire from the heavens, and that would only make things more barren (Lk. 9:55). A broken heart (of human nature) is more likely to curse than to bless. An angry soul is more likely to ask God to withhold the rain and pray that the enemy's crops would wither. Jesus said we must forgive. A good God allows His rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

A soul that refuses to forgive is one that secretly prays for drought, and in so doing becomes dry and cracked itself. Joy wilts and the blooms turn brown and the harvest never comes. How much better to forgive.

When we are hurt by wrong done to us, a gaping fissure opens up in the earth that divides the land and makes

our life smaller. And with so many opportunities to be hurt here in this world, our life is in danger of breaking up like an ice pack in an Artic spring. The life that lives on such an ice flow finds its world getting smaller and smaller everyday. So it is with a man who will not forgive. Each offense cracks the ground under his feet as if the huge tectonic plates of the earth slip apart. Deep ravines open up after such an earthquake and neighbors are separated and neighborhoods divided. The fissures between the Palestinian and Israel are as deep as man's heart is dark. Walls only make it darker.

When the earth cracks open, we may not be able to move things back in place. The earth and world are too large for that. Neither can we fill in the great giant crevices caused by wrongs, for they are too deep. We can build bridges however to reconnect the land. We can, by forgiveness, refuse to allow our lives to become little. We can understand why the Kurd cannot forgive the Turk. They do not have Jesus and they do not know grace. But I know grace, for I have been forgiven by God. I have been given so much of God's forgiveness that I must become the channel through which others might know it as well. We must forgive. If we don't, we become smaller. We become drier. Every wrong may become a tombstone for a dead relationship unless we forgive. Without forgiveness we may soon be living in a grave yard, and like the Gadarian among the tombs, forfeit real happiness. On the other hand, we can see our hurt as a moral challenge of the heart to allow the glue of grace to join the broken pieces of life and refuse to be less than God has meant us to be. Do you want to know the power of God in your life? Then forgive. You may say you can't. We can, we must, especially when we

can't. It is then we witness one of God's awesome powers at work. God can. Forgiveness is the power of God.

id

IOU - Matthew 18:28

“...and he took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what thou owest. ” (Mt 18:28b)

In Matthew 18 the Lord Jesus tells the story of two debtors and a graceful and disgraceful spirit.

One man who was forgiven an enormous debt seized another poor man by the throat for a much lesser debt owed him.

The first debt was so enormous that the consequent lack of charity displayed was outrageous.

Scholars (so to speak) have gone over these ancient books of the transgressor and attempted to calculate how much was owed and how much was forgiven.

Ten thousand talents, whatever it was, was more than could ever be paid.

Every once in a while I go over my own books.

When I see the credits and the debits I am still astonished at how hopelessly in debt I was.

My sins are so many that I too should have spent eternity in the debtor's prison called Hell.

But there, written across the enormous total, written in blood, is see the Word “forgiven.”

King Jesus has forgiven my debt.

Now my life should be one great IOU of gratitude.

Paul called himself a “debtor.”

If you ever find yourself indebted to me, if you have ever sinned against me, if you ever want to close the books

on a spiritual, emotional, or practical debt, come God has deposited enough in my accounts that I will not “take you by the throat” but hug you around the neck and give you some of the vast treasure of forgiveness God has given me.

God has given me so much grace I have no excuse for not being gracious.

id

Train Wrecks and Loco Motives - Matthew 22:29

"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Matt. 22:29

Have you noticed the recent rash of train wrecks? In California, a suicidal man parked his SUV in the path of an oncoming train, and then changed his mind. He left the tracks (that's rational), but neglected to take his vehicle with him (that's irrational). Ten people died. There were two recent derailments, one to the south and the other to the north of us.

Sometimes it takes a train wreck to get our attention. We would be surprised to learn what dangerous cargos pass through our neighborhoods every day. When deadly chemicals spill into the atmosphere, pollute the waterways, or contaminate the environment, people's lives are in danger. Whenever this happens it is proper to call for an investigation.

Many train wrecks are caused by what is called "human error." May God save us all from "human error." When someone fails to see a warning light, or becomes drowsy while at the throttle, or inattentive, disasters can happen.

Some people are pulling boxcar-loads of emotionally hazardous materials right through the center of our lives, or crisscross through our spiritual rail yards every day. May God save us from "human error" or needless accidents, and keep us on track. Many a life and many a church has been derailed in religious train wrecks. Sometimes innocents are injured. Sometimes whole

neighborhoods need to be evacuated. Sometimes the "clean up" is expensive and costly. Sometimes the toxic fumes of bad behavior fill the air. Sometimes, attitudes that are highly acidic bring tears to the eyes.

Sometimes, a maniac stubbornly parks his opinions or preferences on the track and runs away just before the impact. The result is the same. People suffer.

What are the hazardous materials we should avoid?

What cargos must we refuse to carry? Paul said, "Let bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you." Refuse to speak angry or unkind words. They are spiritually toxic. They "grieve" God. Don't waste time hating those who caused or "enjoy" watching wrecks. Just help the injured. Help set the wheels back on track. Determine, that you will know both the Word, and the Power necessary for the journey. Get back on board. We are on our way to heaven. In Eph. 4:32 Paul tells us how to stay on track. He advises us to proceed with "kindness, compassion, and forgiveness."

There were those who wanted to argue with the Lord Jesus about marriage, and heaven and the law of Moses (Matt.22). The Master did not waste time with those who tried to get Him off track. He said, "ye do err..." Stay on track and stay away from those with Loco Motives.

id

Brothers - Matthew 23:8b

"One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

Matt. 23:8b

If you are born-again, you are my brother (period), no ifs, ands or buts. I do not have fundamentalist brothers, and evangelical brothers, Presbyterian brothers, and Methodist brothers. Oh, you can call yourself whatever you like, and it means little to me. You may call yourself "exclusive" and not want to break bread with me, but you are still my brother. You may insist you have knowledge or powers that make me a novice or a neophyte, but that's alright too. When I pray for you, I will speak to the Father of "my brother." And you may divide the religious world in two, trying to keep the amateurs on one side and professionals on the other, but that won't work either. No matter how high your title, I give you a higher one "brother."

The prince of this world does not want us on speaking terms and will find a good reason to make it so, but he can not keep me from praying your name before the greater Prince of Peace.

You might not do things like I do. You might do things I do not feel obliged to do. You may have found a text that you may try to use to keep me out, but I shall try to stay close to the Master who walked through walls. You might have higher steeples, many more lettered degrees, and travel in first class, but we are on the same plane. You may settle for a band of brothers. Jesus left a band of brothers.

Now, not every brother is the same. I am not proud of Jacob and his ambitions, nor of John Mark and his fears, but we have the same heavenly Father. I will not sell Jacob my birthright, and shame on him if he tries to take advantage of me. If John Mark leaves, I do not have to abandon my post. One is my Master. Some see the "high" church and others a "lower." Some think they are "progressives," and some are happily called "traditional." Some might even waste their vote in November, but there is a more important election. Some elections are undecided because of hanging chads and uncertain impressions, but let me make myself clear. I ask only, do you Love Jesus? Have you been born-again? Do you remember when you were not? If the answer is yes, yes, yes, then yes, like it or not, I'm your brother.

id

Don't Play Games With God - Matthew 27:22

John would not play their religious games, and now Jesus would not play either.

Life is too short and death is too serious.

The Jewish leaders were playing games with Pilate.

They brought Jesus into his court and demanded that he try him and condemn him.

Pilate was forced to answer the most important question of his life.

It is the same question every man must answer.

“What shall I do with Jesus?” (Mt. 27:22).

Pilate tried his “three lifelines” but they each failed him: the 50/50, ask the audience, and call a friend.

In verse 17 the 50/50 does not help.

In v. 20-21 he polls the audience, but they were coached to give the wrong answer.

His third lifeline was to ask a friend.

He should have listened to his wife (verse 19) but instead he was more concerned about what Caesar would say (John 19:12).

Pilate ran out of lifelines.

He also ran out of time.

He made the biggest mistake of his life. All the water in all the world could not wash away the stain of the guilt.

History gives some evidence that Pilate committed suicide sometime between 37AD and 41AD during the reign of Gaius.

If he did or not, what we do know is that he missed the most important question on life's greatest test.

"What shall I do with Jesus?"

id

Risen - Matthew 28:6

"He is not here.

He is Risen.

As He said." Matt. 28:6

Splitting the Atom was nothing compared to the impact these words have had on the world.

The earth rotates on its axis.

Christianity revolves on this text.

No more Cross, now the Crown.

How fitting that an angel would preach this sermon.

He is not here, he is risen as he said.

He is not Here.

The LIBERATION.

Death could not keep its prey.

The prison door is open.

Christ sets the captive free.

Oh death where is thy sting?

What happiness, what hope, what hallelujahs are here.

He is Risen.

The Vindication.

"Peter, put away your sword."

The Christ does not need us to fight his battles.

"Pilate, be silent.

You have no power, except what is given you from above.”

Let everyone who mocked him tremble.

He is Risen.

As He Said.

The Validation.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will not pass away.

Once the One who was the Truth had spoken there was no force known or unknown that could keep that word from coming to pass.

As He Said.

Let us rush to his other words and drink them from the cup of the Father’s will.

The Scriptures cannot be broken.

id

Help - Luke 1:37

"For with God nothing shall be impossible"

Luke 1:37

Here is hope.

If anyone is looking for it bring them to this grand canyon and marvel at the depth.

Bring them to the sands of this shore, study the word "nothing" and be stunned by the vastness and breadth of this horizon. To look up at its height you must tilt your spiritual neck far back.

The world talks about faith.

It has taken this text and cut out the

Heart.

The world has taken this text and turned it into a philosophy.

Many preach a kind of positive thinking and a kind of faith that says

"nothing is impossible."

That is a lie.

Stores are filled with "Self-Help"

books that teach if you can think it you can do it.

Nonsense!

The world still does not understand the secret of real faith.

It is in the words "with God."

"With God nothing shall be impossible."

Take "with God" out of the text and man is left with
Hype not Hope.

But bring God into the situation, bring God into the life,
and we like

Mary must declare "be unto me according to thy word."

It matters not how hard the thing

Or how impossible the task

With God as my both Lord and King

I can do all that he shall ask id

How Much? - Luke 3:2

"...the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness." Lk. 3:2

Preacher, How much are you willing to pay for God's word? I was a newspaper delivery boy. Not everyone was. I used to deliver the World Telegram and Sun, a Brooklyn afternoon newspaper. Rain or shine, snow or hale I never remember delivery being cancelled. I rode my bike and when that was impossible, I walked. I was never driven. Not everyone on a street got a paper, only a few here and there who subscribed. I delivered to over one hundred special people. They, my customers, paid a price to get the afternoon news. It was my job to see that they got it.

God has given me the good news. There are thousands all around who have not subscribed to it, nor have any interest in receiving it.

Even many Christians do not realize that although the final word was typeset in eternity and published thousands of years ago, it is fresh and new every day. It is living and powerfully dynamic, rich and relevant, and as up to date at the last news television broadcast. But more than that, it is personal. It is not man's word, but God's word delivered to those who wish to subscribe to it and pay the price. The preacher who wishes to have God's word to proclaim on Sunday must be up early on Monday and everyday eagerly awaiting some news from heaven and anxious to pour over the pages of God's timely, but eternal word.

When the word was delivered in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar a messenger all the way from heaven was winding his way through the traffic, congestion, and chaos of politics and commerce to deliver a message called the Word. He did not stop at Caesar's house, nor Pontius Pilate's, nor Herod's. He did not stop in Ithraea to see Philip, nor at Annas' and Caiapha's place of business. All of these were, in the world's eyes, important people. No, God's word went into the wilderness and was delivered to John. It came to John because he was ready and willing to receive it and he had paid a price. God will gladly place you on the route for morning, afternoon and evening delivery if you are willing to pay the price.

id

"What a Word is This?" - Luke 4:36

" (Lk. 4:36).

People in

Capernaum were surprised by the authority with which Jesus spoke.

"What a word is this?" they wondered out loud.

The Hebrew children said something similar when they came upon the manna for the very first time.

They said "what is this?" which is what manna means.

We hold in our hands the words of Christ, and what a word it is!

His words are eternal.

His words are spirit and are truth.

His words are God's words.

Luke describes them as I have found them myself to be.

He calls them gracious (4:22).

He calls them powerful (4:32).

Grace and Power come together in Christ like two merging suns.

No one need ever be in the dark again.

The brilliance of his words shine into every dark place chasing away things that like to live in the dark.

John calls him the Word.

This Word came into the world.

This Word became flesh.

What happened to the Word, what men did to, and do with the Word writes the story of every life.

What will we do with the Word today?

Jesus confronted Satan, the dark one, with words which were first uttered in Deuteronomy

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word or God.” (Lk. 4:1).

id

Check the Flow - Luke 8:44

"Stanching" in

Luke 8:44

If the life of the flesh is in the blood, the woman pushing through the throng was dying with every step.

For twelve years she had carried this heavy burden.

Her health was spent and the Scripture tells us that so was any wealth she might have had, which she gave to physicians.

None could heal her.

She did her best to draw close to Jesus.

Then with one "trembling" touch she touched him.

In the Subways of New York City, next to the glistening tracks of steel, and sheathed by a wooden canopy is a third rail.

That is how the train gets its power.

It has none of its own.

A little foot (or hand) reaches out and rides this ribbon of electricity bring the railroad car to life.

This woman in Luke, did not think she had actually touched him directly.

She touched the hem of his garment, but he said "who touched me?"

Each day we reach out to touch the Almighty.

We say that we have not actually touched him.

We say we have only touched his book.

We might not feel it immediately, but he does.

Each time we take up the sacred collection of his words he know it.

And he knows our need.

Each time we reach out and touch the third rail "power" is gone out of [him] and we are strengthened.

Each day we touch it, we touch him, and when we do, we are energized and empowered by his grace. Through grace, first we find the power to stop; second, we find the power to go.

id

Positive - Luke 8:46

Watch out for the negative people. Watch out for them; they are everywhere. They seem to have the Minus touch. If the Midas touch makes everything gold, the Minus touch turns everything grey. These will try to sap your joy and enthusiasm for life. They sigh more than they sing.

Bunyan's Pilgrim needed to beware of the Slough of Despond. We too need to watch where we walk. There is no gift of "discouragement" given to the New Testament church as far as I know. Watch out for the gloom and doom folks. Black clouds are always on the horizon for them. Some folks are not happy unless they are unhappy. As with cows, they should have bells around their necks as we can at least get out of the way before they trample us with all their bad news.

Jesus was the most powerful and positive person to ever grace the face of the earth. Of course He was God come down to be with us, not against us. The woman with the issue of blood had had one negative experience after another until she met Jesus. When she touched Him her issue was "stanching." She was almost "drained." Life has a way of draining us if we are not careful. She was drained financially, physically, socially and spiritually. Then she got in touch with Jesus. She touched Him.

Jesus said, "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me" (Lk. 8:46). The word is "Power." The KJV calls it virtue. There is power in virtue. There is power in good. Power went out of Him. She and He were the only ones who knew something had happened.

Everywhere too, there are believers, people filled with God and filled with grace. We are grateful for these gifted with the gift of encouragement. Thank God for saints like Barnabas, and all the other Sons of Consolation. They just touch us; they just brush by us and we are blessed and better for it. They can do more with a single word than some sour saint can do with a whole sermon to lift our flagging spirit. The sunlight of their countenance is most welcome and the darkness overcomes it not. We thank God for them.

If you can find none, look for Jesus. Open His Book of Books and touch Him. Let Him touch you with His Word. If we, like this dear woman (in Luke) could just push our way past all the negative religious people, past the multitude of gloom and doomers, all the Pharisees and the Sad-You-Sees and touch the hem of Him, He will heal what hurts. Negative people need help too. We believers work for the oldest Power and Light Company. Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." Touch Him. Jesus declared, "all power is given unto me." He is never drained. Of this I am positive. God inhabits praise.

id

Broken Spirit - Luke 23:46

“Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” Lk. 23:46

In Hebrew it is “ruach.” In Greek it is “pneuma.” To us, it is “spirit.” In the Bible it is often translated “wind,” or “breath.” To God, spirit is everything. Jesus said “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”

On the cross, the Lord Jesus culminated His wonderful life and earthly ministry with the words “Into Thy hands, I commit my spirit.” His was a beautiful spirit.

Spirits can be weighed, broken, defiled, captured or set free. Spirits can sing, and spirits can soar. To God, I repeat, spirits are everything. There are unclean spirits, and diseased spirits, and dark spirits. God is Spirit and seeks for those who would worship (know and appreciate Him) in spirit and in truth.

Proverbs Sixteen speaks of spirits. It speaks of a spiritual scale (v.2). Sin makes the spirit heavy. While only God knows how heavy, we all have felt the weight of a heavy conscience. Once released, and without a body to hold it up, the sinner’s soul and spirit will plunge into the depths of hell. Like the lead shot of a minuteman’s musket, each round is heavy. Faith is a call to spiritual disarmament. When James and John wanted to “call down fire from heaven,” Jesus told them they did not know what spirit they were of. Like buckshot, all sin is heavy. God weighs the spirit. We should also. We should weigh in every morning and evening and make sure our hearts hold no bitterness, envy, anger, pride or a

hundred other leaden pellets that have wounded us, or which we hold as an arsenal with which to hurt others.

Not everyone feels the weight of sin. Many are oblivious to it. These spirits are not as heavy as they are “haughty” (Prov. 16:18). God hates haughty spirits as well. Nothing will plunge a soul deeper or faster into hell than pride. Nothing lightens the spirit more than humility. Satan will gladly hand us heavily weighted trophies that invite us to polish our pride, knowing that we are likely to place them on our mantles and become chained to our own self. Humility takes no honors and gives God all the glory.

Thirdly, the proverb (16:32) speaks of the importance of “ruling” our spirit. Never was there a more important government than this. Never was there a more difficult task. God alone must be our government. Christ must be our King. Without the Spirit of Christ, our spirits are no match for its many enemies and the insurgents that want to topple our righteous regime and leave our hearts in ruins and in chaos. The crucified life has discovered the triumph of the cross and the words “into Thy hands I commit my spirit.”

When we have at last discovered what it means to be crucified with Christ, we too will give to God our broken spirit and then live again to watch it rise, dance on broken bones and worship.

id

Of God - John 1:13

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13

Here is the mystery of the New Birth.

Here we find the genius and the genetics of salvation.

It's not of blood.

That is biology. It's not of the will of the flesh.

That is psychology.

It's not of the will of man.

That is sociology.

It's not of blood or biology.

Science is trying to save us.

While science may help us live a little longer it can not really make us live a little better.

Science can break a man down to the very strands of DNA but it cannot find salvation in the genes.

Instead of reading genes, man had better read Genesis.

Biology is not the answer.

It's not of the will of the flesh or psychology.

Another way of saying "will of the flesh" is will power.

Will power never saved anyone from the grave.

Man's will is damaged.

It wants the wrong things.

If self will o (will of the flesh) could save, then salvation is just a matter of turning over a new leaf.

No, salvation is more than a new leaf; it is a new life.

It's not of the will of man or sociology.

There are many well meaning people who try to save others from the outside in, but that does not work.

They clean him up and give him a new set of clothes.

The sinner is the same, even in a new suit.

But of God.

If God does not work nothing happens.

Oh, may God work in your life today.

It's not my blood or my noble birth

That will take my soul to glory

But Christ's shed blood that has the worth

And that's the Gospel story id

ABC'S of Life - John 3:2

“We know that thou art a teacher come from God” Jn. 3:2.

Imagine a living alphabet. Imagine each letter as a living breathing thing. Imagine the “A” or the “I” taking a walk together or forming a partnership. Imagine the Greek Iota scampering beneath the skirts of the Omicron or Omega. Such an idea is not beyond belief when we study what is called the DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) or chemical helix of life. Scientists have discovered what they call the Rosetta Stone of life itself. This Alphabet of Life has only four letters. The arrangement of these four letters in various forms of pairs determines if a being is a human being or a lightning bug. Four different Nucleotides (adenine, thymine, cytosine, guanine) form what is called the base. This base is combined with one molecule of phosphoric acid and one molecule of sugar. What it comes down to is we are somewhere between phosphoric acid and sugar. This might explain why some are sweet and some are bitter, but perhaps that is making life too simple.

Another generation discovered that the World was round, and a lot bigger than they had thought. Our generation has discovered the genetic alphabet of Genesis. What are we going to do with these ABC's (ATC's and G's)? Eve wanted to try her hand at being God. When she finished writing her story, it had a bad ending. She should have waited for God to teach her to write better. We may know the letters, but if we don't know the LORD we are more likely to misspell and get the letters out of order. Without a teacher we are liable

to get things backward. If we are not careful L-I-V-E, can become E-V-I-L. Two thousand years ago the Teacher “come from God” came to correct our poor spelling. Not only would He correct our errors, He would die on the cross to erase all our iniquities and transgressions, and Oh yes, by the way, to make us sweeter too.

id

Living Proof - John 6:6

And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do." Jn. 6:6

Sometimes the teacher writes a hard problem on the blackboard.

He calls us to the front of the class and hands the chalk.

We are about to be tested.

What have we learned?

What had Philip learned from all those days and nights with Jesus?

What had he learned at the Pool of Bethesda or by the well at Sychar.

What had he learned at the wedding at Cana when the water was turned into wine?

Philip was still having problems with his multiplication tables.

Christ knew the answer.

He could and would solve the problem.

When God rings the bell (School or Dinner) we need only show up and take our seat in the classroom or at the table.

Christ can fill our mind, our heart, or our plate.

If you are pondering over some difficult problem you find impossible to answer.

In faith and humility hand the Master the chalk and ask him to show you "what he would do."

How often I have failed to pass some living test
To trust though faith assailed letting God then do what's
best
It's not my blood or my noble birth
That will take my soul to glory
But Christ's shed blood that has the worth
And that's the Gospel story id

I Love the Taste of Bread - John 6:48

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." Jn. 6:48

We have all seen examples of puppy love or the uncertainty of childhood romance. "She loves me, she loves me not, she loves me, she loves me not," a young lover seeks some assurance about some heart-throb. Not willing to take "no" for an answer, he reaches for another flower and keeps pulling the petals until he is pleased with the result. That is how we play at loving.

Man's love is feeble. Man's love is mixed with many ill-defined motives. One half of all marriages end in divorce as an awful witness to either the weakness or the warp of man's love. Humans often use love as a weapon or a tool. Man's love is conditional. We love those who either like us or are like us. Some hoard their love like gold or their last morsels of bread in a concentration camp. Someone has to be very special before they break off a piece and share it. Our love has its limits. There is only so much of it to go around.

We do not have to wonder about God's love. He loves us. His love is not "puppy love," infatuation, or romance. God's love is deep, God's love is sincere, God's love is certain. God's love is everlasting and forever. We have but to stand at the foot of Mount Calvary and gaze at the cross to see the breadth, the length, the depth and the height of God's love (Eph. 3:18). God's love is a love that will never not love us.

Once we know God's love, once we have tasted its sweetness, once we experience its vastness and are assured of our access to its inexhaustible supply, we are

not afraid to share it. There is plenty for you, and there is plenty for me. When I see the bread on the table, I am reminded of God's love. I am reminded that God loves me. We are just like the beggar telling another beggar where they can get bread. No one need go hungry for love in this world. God is love.

id

Hearing Aid - John 10:4

"He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice." Jn. 10:4

Esau got the look down enough to fool a man who was nearly blind, but he had trouble with the voice. Isaac's instincts made him question the identity of the one who stood before him. He said the "voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau" Gen. 27:22.

Too bad the instinct and appetite for "savory food, such as I love" was stronger than his inclination.

Our love of venison can cloud our other senses. A stomach can stop a heart for God. Paul warned the Philippians about enemies of the soul "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) Phil 3:19.

One danger is in "getting in front" of the shepherd and failing to follow him. A sheep who not being led by the shepherd is being led by its belly. Soon, the poor creature is far away and alone. Eat, dear one, but never get out of hearing distance of "his voice."

The second danger is letting how we feel cast the deciding vote.

It "felt" like Esau.

Feelings were wrong.

Listen for the Shepherd's voice and follow him.

Everything that drowns his voice

Is nothing less than vice

Though your heart is set on venison
Loss of faith is not worth the price id

In Love - John 11:36

“Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him,”

John 11:36

While those who witnessed the sight of Jesus weeping could not possibly have understood the depth of his sadness, they arrived at a correct conclusion.

“Behold how he loved him.”

Lazarus would know the power and the magnetism of that love.

It called him out of the darkness of death back into life and the light of day.

Then love ordered his “loosed” and then love led him.

Notice where love led him in chapter 14.

“...Lazarus....whom he raised from the dead...sat at the table with him.”

Love takes us from a tomb to a table.

From that day forward I am sure the desire of Lazarus’ heart was to be “with him.”

That is the goal.

That is the point.

That is God’s will, to be “with him.”

We have come a long way.

We have come from tears, from the tomb, to a table, and are on our way to bow before his throne.

The whole point of going to heaven is to be “with him.”

Those who have no desire to be with him here, also have
no real desire to be with him there.

The proof that Jesus loves us is not seen in that he cried,
rather it is seen in that he died.

“Behold, how he loved [us].

Remember the empty tomb and remember how he
showed that he loved us.

I Come to his table and show that

I love him.

Stepping from the darkness after he hath called me
forth

Watch his footsteps that all may clearly trace

Marking path from the darkened death-filled tomb

To a table sweet and a sweeter place

Where Lord of life through death has made him room

He takes a seat with him this Lord of Grace id

Be-Cause - John 18:37

"To this end was I born..." Jn 18:37

There is a place on every death certificate for the cause of death. Some doctor we don't even know will fill in that blank for us. He will write the name of some disease or ailment to explain our passing.

When I came into the world, another doctor filled in our birth certificate. There was a place for the date and time of birth, place of birth, and names of our parents. There was no place in which he could fill in the cause of life.

The cause of life is more important than the cause of death. It is of the most importance that we discover it before we die. Jesus knew why he was born. We can also. In God's Scriptures I learn about the cause of my impending death. There also I learn about the cause of my life, which is far more important.

All things were made by him and for him (Col. 1:16).
May everything I do be for him today.

I don't know how many days

On this world my soul shall live

But I was born to Praise

And to God all glory give id

Catch the Wind - Acts 2:2

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Acts 2:2

In the late eighteenth century, wind was oil. Before petroleum began to fill the veins of the industrial revolution, wind filled the sails of adventure and commerce, and 'Britannia ruled the waves.' Enormous sheets of canvas hung like the blades of a turbine in the form of topsails and topgallants on barks, frigates, and British Men of War. Steam engines were still a novelty and Ben Franklin had just recently discovered electricity using his kite and string. Inquisitive men were probing the powers of the universe and searching the globe for its hidden treasures.

Leaving the calm, comfort, and safety of the harbor, brave men worked the spider web of line and sail, in a kind of dance with the wind. As the wind increased the first mate would order more cloth to rise in procession like faces on a totem pole, and as the wind increased even more, one by one, the sails would be taken in and furled. When the winds blew in storm like fury all canvas was removed and captains (as in the Book of Acts) would "let her drive."

Steam, Oil, and other forms of power have seen the disappearance of schooners and those who knew the art of the ancient mariner and skill needed to ride the wind. There was a time when lighthouses dotted the shoreline and men studied the tide's ebb and flow. There was a time when men were close to nature and much closer to God. There were times when sailors dreaded the

doldrums as much as the fury found in rounding Cape Horn.

Perhaps a seaman or midshipman out at sea in the eighteenth century never broke the sound barrier when it came to speed, but somehow I think he experienced life more while feeling the wind upon his cheek, smelling the salt in the air, hearing the breaking of waves on a wooden hull, and he came closer to touching heaven than modern man ever will with all his technology.

When the Ship of Zion first left port in Acts Chapter One, it waited for the wind and the tide of the New Testament. The early church comprised of one hundred and twenty souls, gathered in the port of an appointed place on the orders of its Master and Commander. The Book of Acts is a divinely preserved ship's log. In it we see her sails catching the wind. When those sheets were not filled with the Spirit they were being filled with prayer. Never was there a ship more beautiful or one that moved with more grace, or was under more power than she. Reading about it in books, even in God's Book is not enough. Standing on the dock and watching it set sail, just will not do. We must not miss this boat. The church was christened on Pentecost. While it is true that heaven is paid for in full, it is also true, that those who gathered in the upper room that day were those who would gladly pay whatever it might cost just to be on board.

id

Of Evil Spirits and of Exorcists - Acts 19:15

Malice and anger and revenge are as mad demoniacs set loose like wild men to tear down the very house in which they have been harbored. After breaking free in a frenzy, they are as likely to cut the householder to ribbons as anyone who should foolishly knock upon their door.

Christ is the only Exorcist who can cleanse the temple of a troubled sin-filled heart. Christ is the only one who can face and stand down such evil things whose name is sometimes Legion. Without Christ, the rusty chains of resolution are the only feeble restraints that hold these tempers in check. Like tigers in a cage they merely bide their time until they can break free to rend and tear leaving crying and chaos in their wake.

Even while a demoniac may appear to be resting and stilled, deep within, somewhere near the equator of the soul, a tropical depression is churning and white-capping the waves of a troubled sea. Wise men would do well to change their course and travel home another way rather than risk getting caught in such a growing rage. Woe to those who get caught in such a storm without a sacred shelter.

The Seven Sons of Sceva were no match for a single demon, yet they dared to play with evil spirits. They even dared and attempted to wield the name of "JESUS" like some David with a Goliath's sword, forgetting that children should not play with fire. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye." (Acts 19:15). The evil spirit stirred like an awakened dragon, sniffed the air with contempt for impostors posing as exorcists. The

possessed man leaped on them, overcame them, and prevailed against them.

Demons only approached Christ with slinking caution, with their tails between their legs knowing that a single word from the Divine would cast them into the abyss. Pretend exorcists and pretend Christians play a dangerous game. And woe to the carnal Christian that bandies about the “name which is above every name,” using it carelessly. Woe to the make-believe believer who is ever sailing closer to Hell not realizing that once caught in the undertow of darkness there is no turning back. “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?”

As David stood before the giant with but sling and stone, we too must be real and be men “after God’s own heart.” I am no match for demons or for evil spirits. I dare not fight with carnal weapons evil spirits large or small. “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?” (Prov. 27:4). Hatred, malice, envy, prejudice, disdain, and ridicule are just a few of the names of one who’s Legion.

“Who am I?” Well, I am simply one of many who JESUS loved and for whom JESUS died. I am no match for evil by myself. May I never wander so far from the Shepherd of my Soul that an evil spirit would have occasion to ask me such a foolish question. But may the evil thing run and hide when it sees me walking by my Savior’s side. May the Spirit, who is God Himself, so fill and abide in me that there is not an atom’s room for evil things. May I leave to others the work of exorcist as I exercise myself rather unto godliness in prayer, and fasting, and feasting on the Words of Him whose name is Love. (1Tim. 4:8).

id

Twice Broken - Romans 2

In chapter one of Romans the human heart was described as a dark place and dark thing: “their foolish heart was darkened.” After laying the human heart wide open under the brilliant light of truth in chapter one, and exposing all the carnal corruptions hiding therein, Paul turns to us sitting in the gallery of the operating room (to those of us who are disgusted at the sight of all the blood and gore of sin) and with all the authority of a chief resident and spiritual cardio-vascular surgeon, informs us that our heart is no better. The catalogue of sins in the first chapter is so lengthy that it is no wonder that the humanity described was suffering with chronic heart disease and congestive heart failure. Failure, yes that is a good word to describe a human heart and life without God.

But it gets worse. Before we go away “shaking our heads” Paul speaks to those who are all too ready to condemn others. The word *katakrino* means to judge looking down on, or as we may say “looking down our noses” at someone. Religious people are very good at this very bad behavior. Paul, in chapter two of Romans tears down the hypocrite’s hiding place. Those who seek refuge from the coming judgment in the “Fall Out Shelter” of the God’s law (retest in the law, v.17) have crawled into a spider hole, or a bear trap, and are resting on the hair trigger of presumption. The law is good and holy, but it will not save us from the judgment. Those who think they are morally superior to others are proof themselves of the pernicious nature of the human heart. It is only the “goodness and forbearance” of God

that keeps us from being crushed under the wrath of God's judgment.

Once we feel the pain of a spiritually broken heart, then and only then, is there any hope for an eternal and spiritual recovery. In repentance we turn from sin and flee. By faith we flee, not to the law which condemns us, but to Christ who saves us. Romans chapter two describes the danger of the hypocritical heart (a hypocrite is a "pretender") that pretends to be what it is not, better than others. In honest humiliation we look at this broken thing. And when we bring our hurting and humbled hearts, then God will heal the hurts and fix what, in love, His gentle hand has broken.

id

What's the Matter? - 1 Corinthians 6:1

This is a question Paul could have asked when he visited the church in Corinth.

He said, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?”

Spiritual discernment is found in knowing what matters and what doesn't matter.

The unsaved individual has everything mixed up.

The things that don't matter, he thinks are important, while the things that really matter he thinks are not.

We have all seen people caught making sand castles with such intensity and care, while their real lives are crumbling and falling apart.

We have all seen people passionately yell and cheer for their favorite football team while sitting in a freezing cold stadium, but stay away from church because the weather is bad.

We have all seen people cry over a silly soap opera on TV while remaining dry eyed when a man dies and goes out into eternity without Christ.

In Corinth they were embroiled in conflicts with one another about the “smallest matters.”

Paul pointed this out and said “I speak to your shame.”

It is always a shame when we get what matters mixed up.

Knowing what matters and what does not matter is discernment.

First, you matter to God.

People matter to God.

Things, no matter how valuable in this world are of the “smallest matters.”

Many religious arguments are really fights over the “smallest matters.” They are about things.

There is a big difference between being religious and being spiritual.

Only a spiritual man knows what worth fighting for.

Two children were fighting.

Their mother came into their room to find out “what was the matter.”

Most of this world’s arguments are about things that don’t really matter.

id

The Simplicity of Won and One - 2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

2Cor. 11:3

I cannot help but think that the same Satan that beguiled Eve in the garden to destroy paradise comes closer to us than we like to imagine. He is subtle, but not simple. He would corrupt the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. This evil one has his questions still.

“Hath God said...?” sounded innocent enough.

But by the time she was through with trying to answer it, she was entertaining a nest of doubts that writhed like a sea of serpents.

The poison of these asps has fueled the flames of hell to this day and has razed the once green canopy of peace and left many a faith and fellowship a smoking ruin.

My mind and wit is no match for this dark angel who once walked among the stars of God.

Any sword of reason I may wield shall prove too dull.

Only the sword of the spirit will win the day.

Knowing this, the evil beast will yet attempt to tamper with our only weapon.

He will either try blunting its edge with foolish questions, send us off fighting phantoms, or worse; he will have us turn the blade on our own.

He would steal us away from the simplicity of Christ and beguile us with solving puzzles of the universe, sophistry, or prophecy.

After trusting Christ and meeting with him in the garden, and worshipping at his nail-scarred feet, we are in danger of losing sight of him as we entertain some subtle question posed by Satan it becomes our quest.

We must prove the Preterist an infidel, hang some hyper-Calvinist, or raise a standard of some determined doctrine like an ensign on the pinnacle of the temple. We spend our days searching for proof texts like so many poppies from which to make the opium of our opinions, and spend our nights smoking our water pipes in danger of becoming addicted to some minor doctrine.

Half the church is off on some holy war and is in danger of dying on a wrong and ill-chosen battlefield, when all the while Christ has simply asked us to bring the news of a victory already “won,” and that we his followers be “one.”

If the serpent has failed to keep us from being won.

Be assured he will spend the rest of evil days trying to keep us from being one.

Once the disciples argued in his very presence about which one of them was the greatest.

Now the church argues about his second coming, his gifts, or his grace, and like so many money changers in the temple, is in danger of missing the moment and the majesty of his presence.

2/7/02 id

His Son - Galatians 4:4

"In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4:4

"God sent forth his Son."

That's God With Us

"made of a woman"

That's God Of Us

"made under the law"

That's God For Us

"that we might receive"

That's God In Us

That God would even think to walk where we walk is astounding.

That he take upon himself the form of a man and would feel what we feel is incredible.

That he would die for our sins is beyond human comprehension.

That Christ would dwell in our hearts, is nothing less than--why, it is nothing less than faith id

Flesh Wounds - Galatians 5:16

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

Gal. 5:16

Remember the old cowboy movies?

Remember the hero being hit during a gunfight, holding his arm and telling us not to worry because it was “only a flesh wound?”

How silly! Ouch, as if flesh wounds were nothing to worry about.

Flesh wounds can be the most painful for that is where most of our nerve endings are; that’s where our feelings lie, in the flesh.

When my

“feelings” have been hurt it is evidence that someone has found my “flesh.”

God wants us to live in the Spirit not in the flesh.

Paul had to treat the

“flesh wounds” of believers in the early church.

The church at Corinth had many.

The Galatians also often seemed to be in danger of bleeding to death from “flesh wounds.”

Satan aims for the flesh.

If he can wound enough believers they will be so preoccupied with their own wounds that they will forget about their mission.

A local church (which is also a “body”) can suffer from flesh wounds.

Paul describes them as “works of the flesh,” yet they are actually cause wounds.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, seditions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelries; what a mess! (Gal 5:21).

In the flesh some in Galatia were biting and devouring one another (5:15). Little band-aids won’t do.

Spiritual wounds require serious first aid.

Only love can heal such hurts.

“...but by love serve one another...For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this [LOVE] thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” 5:13-14.

Be careful of flesh wounds.

They can become infected and cripple our Christian walk.

If you get one, put God’s love on it and remember the One who was wounded for our transgressions.

If you find some who has been hurt by sin, do all you can to get them to the Great Physician who can “bind up the broken hearted.”

id

Perfect - Ephesians 2:8-9

“For the perfecting of the saints...”

It seems some “saints” are not yet perfect (Eph. 4:12).

I belong to this imperfect group.

God is light and absolute moral perfection.

Only God is perfect. No sin or sinner can approach this altogether Holy One and survive.

As certain germs are destroyed by their very exposure to the sun, so a sinner (because of the nature of sin) cannot approach, let alone survive in God’s holy presence.

It should be pointed out that this “holiness” or this “righteousness” as Paul calls it in his gospel, is a positive living effulgence, and moral energy of light and virtue.

The heartbeat of holiness is love, and this love is modulated with an everlasting pulse of goodness and truth.

How can man who was originally created in God’s likeness, and now so far fallen and ruined by sin be restored to a spiritual state that is in harmony with the purposes and plan of the Creator?

How can love lift a sinner out of the consequences of the curse without compromising the righteousness of God and his law?

How can a man be saved from sin and become a son of the living God?

The answer, of course is Jesus Christ.

God would come himself and become the payment and ransom for sin.

As all men are sinners through Adam's line (we are sinners by nature, as well as sinners by nurture).

God himself would become a perfect man, and in this humanity, by faith and submission to the Father, and by the power of the Spirit, as the perfect Son, live life as it was meant to be, and then die the only death that would sufficiently satisfy the demand of eternal justice, having all men's sins imputed to himself.

In this brilliant plan of salvation, as a sinless Christ who in himself would never know death, tasted death for every man, that every man might taste life and live it abundantly and eternally.

The genius of this gospel could only have been generated by God as it flies in the face of every man-made religion and home-grown remedy.

It is all of God and He alone gets all the glory.

In this salvation "by grace though faith," we point to his merit, not our own.

I was unworthy the day I came upon this truth, and in myself, I am unworthy still.

I am not saved "because I saw the light," though see it I did (Acts 26:18).

Nor am I saved because I "turned," yet turn I did.

Nor am I saved because I switched sides and rejected the authority and power of Satan, and flee did I, as Israel hurried out of Egypt. The first involves "vision," the second "decision," the third "division."

It is not the vision, decision, or division that saved me, rather it was the “provision.”

I am saved because I received something from Jesus Christ.

Salvation is a gift.

No one can take that away.

As believers we may falter along the way in our vision, decision, and division, but nothing can separate us from the love of God and Christ’s eternal provision.

While we grow in grace and faith, we become "mature" and more like him, but he alone is the Perfect One. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

” Eph. 2:8-9.

id

Dwelling - Ephesians 3:17

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith..."

Eph. 3:17

How can the God that made the universe fit within this tiny sphere of the human heart?

How can the Lord of all, of Heaven and earth, and things under the earth, dwell in such a little space you ask?

The answer is, by faith.

Faith does not make God smaller, it makes us bigger.

Large is the soul that would welcome such a guest.

Small is the person and the life that turns him away.

Faith throws open the door, and wide the gate to "Let the King of glory come in."

The widow who made room for God by faith, and was willing to give her last little handful of meal (1Ki. 17:15) to the prophet saw her store increase.

Faith lets God in, and when God comes in a man he is always larger.

When we fill our minutes with God's word those minutes are not wasted.

The one who gives God his time finds he does not have less of it, but more.

"In the beginning," John says "was the Word."

We are also told that "the Word was with God."

When the Word is with us, then we are with God.

Faith makes room for the Almighty.

Of all the places God could dwell
He would dwell within my heart
And if He does my life will tell
And faith is the way to start id

The Kind Kind - Ephesians 4:32

"Kill your enemies." (vs.?)

What Bible is that in? I cannot seem to find the chapter and verse in mine. The verse that comes closest is in fact the opposite. Jesus said, "Love your enemies."

Killing your enemies is easy. Loving your enemies, now that is something else. It is something else. It is real Christianity. What kind of Christianity is real? It is the kind that is found in Christ. It is the place where truth and mercy meet. (Psalm 85:5). I believe the real kind of Christianity is the kind kind.

When we do something wrong we cause pain and suffering. I hurt someone and ultimately hurt own soul. That hurt that I have caused effects the one I have hurt, and that person might hurt someone else as a result of their own pain. This is a cycle of pain and suffering. A Palestinian, out of hurt, anger, pain, disappointment and despair blows himself up, killing and maiming others, causing more pain and suffering. The survivors and those who mourn the loss of loved ones limp through life, and some pass along their hurt and pain in how they treat others, (especially those who look like the ones who caused their pain). There is an endless chain reaction of misery that, like a "run away" core in a nuclear reactor has gotten out of control and is about to have a melt-down and burn through the core of the earth.

This chain reaction of sin started in the Garden of Eden. There has been a lot of hurt and pain ever since, all the result of this original sin. Christ came into the world, entered the core of the reactor and single handedly

removed, what Paul called the "sting" of death (with his own death on the Cross). But since every individual has his own "run away" reactor, one by one each must solve their own sin problem. Again, Christ is willing to enter every contaminated heart, through the door of their faith and deliver them from ultimate destruction.

Once that reactor is brought back "under control" it can produce power and be used for good. How much "cleaning up" and decontamination must be done depends on many things. Sometimes, there is no way to fix all the damage done. Sometimes, as with the oil spill of the EXXON Valdeze, many innocent creatures are covered with goop and are beyond help. Some, if caught in time can be saved. Some once pristine coastlines will never be the same, at least in our lifetime. But we try to contain the oil slick of spiritual negligence and, by the grace of God, try to do better.

Every time I do or say something that is unkind, crude oil spills into the ocean we share. Every unkind act pollutes the waters. Every kind act cleans an oil covered stone, or water fowl, or other creature. Kindness has its own chain reaction. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you" Eph. 4:32. Yes, this is the best kind. Seems that many, still covered with goop, are still waiting for the kind kind.

1/16/03 id

A Man of Substance - Hebrews 11:1

How's your faith doing these days? While faith is not something you can put in a box or something you can see, the Bible teaches that if it is real it will have substance and evidence. Lot's of people say they have faith, but there is no substance to it, and there is precious little evidence. I once knew a child who had an imaginary friend. They used to play together and as far as I could tell, they were together a lot. But I never saw any evidence, and from what I could tell, there was no substance.

There is plenty of evidence when faith is real. As with the resurrection of Jesus according to Acts 1 there were "many infallible proofs."

I can not see the wind. It is invisible. Yet, many times I see the evidence and I have often "felt" the substance. The proofs of faith are manifested in conviction, confidence, kindness, and courage, just to name a few of them. As a matter of fact, it is hard to hide real faith. Real faith has feet. Not only does it have feet that move or stay on the word of some inaudible command, it has hands that serve, ears that listen, and a heart that sings. Jesus said no man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel, but rather on a candlestick so it giveth light to all that are in the house."

There is a fire in my soul

Like a sun that rose to shine

An altar with a burning coal

Stirred by Christ my LORD Divine id

Warning - Hebrews 11:29

“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” Heb. 11:29

I remember someone doing something dangerous on TV while prefacing their performance with a warning: “Boys and Girls, don’t try this at home.”

They went on to explain that they were a trained professional and that someone could be seriously injured attempting to imitate them.

Such a proviso should be placed on the cover of every Bible.

The Bible is a book of faith for faith.

If someone tries to live the law without grace they will die.

If someone attempts to try faith without grace they will perish also.

The Egyptians watched carefully as Israel marched through the parted waters of the Red Sea and must have concluded: “we can do that also.”

Wrong!

The passage was a part of the Passover.

The march was a miracle.

Many try to do Christian things because on the surface they seem to be so common.

An unsaved person can sing in the choir, give to the needy, teach a class, and serve in the nursery.

They can dress like a Christian (if there is such a thing),
behave like a Christian, sing like a Christian, and even
preach like a Christian without being a Christian.

The difference was that the Egyptians had faith in
themselves the Hebrews had faith in God.

Faith is not about what we can do.

It is about what God can do with us.

That Peter walked on water is not a call to me

To try to mimic miracles or an Apostle be

It's not for me to follow Peter, John, or Paul

My eyes must be on Jesus, and only heed his call id

Crude Oil - 1 John 2:15

There was a time when Saudi Arabia was a barren sea of sand and dust storms.

There was a time when Arabia was “somewhere, far away,” only to be visited in our imaginations as we heard of Ali Baba and the forty thieves.

Islam was a strange and exotic religion that had little to do us.

Then we became addicted to oil. This black blood became the blood pumping through the veins of the industrial revolution.

Like children being hooked on sugar we could not stay away from the candy store.

Today the west is defined by its abundance of things. Today we want our SUV's and our VCR's and our air-conditioned comfort, and we can't have them without first buying Saudi oil.

Our dependence on Arab oil has given the East great leverage and power over the West.

Some see the solution to our present problems in reducing our dependency to foreign oil, not realizing that it is not our lust for oil, but our lust itself that is the problem.

Jesus said, “life does not consist in the abundance of things.”

If that is true, America is not very much these days, if you take away her things.

Jesus told the story of the ten virgins.

All ten had lamps, but only five had oil.

It is the story about virgin oil.

All ten had great hopes for the future.

All ten believed that, their savior, their love, their happiness would come at any moment.

They all dreamed of a kingdom, and they awaited Prince Charming.

But because five were foolish, they were not ready should he come in the dark.

This, of course, is a warning by Christ to the church to watch and be ready for his coming again.

That is the obvious teaching.

There is a less obvious, but equally significant warning in this parable for our generation.

We are too dependent on this world's energy.

We need and demand more and more power.

We are addicted to physical oil to the point that we are spiritually empty and unprepared for dark days that lie ahead.

Five had an energy source inside the lamps to enlighten, to fuel, to empower them.

The other five, although they looked much the same, were empty. What the wise had was not for sale.

The foolish virgins would have to get oil from the same place the wise ones did.

In the story, they waited too long.

We do not have to wait another minute.

John warned us.

He said, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world..." (1Jn 2:15). If I am filled with the things of the world, I cannot be filled with the things of God.

If I fill my heart with the world, I will have to keep going back to the world for more of their "crude" oil.

If I am wise, I will desire only the virgin oil of God himself and the fullness of his Spirit.

"Filled with the fullness of God," (Eph. 3:19) I will not have to buy what the world is selling, and I will not have to pay the awful high price they are asking.

id