

The Goodness of God

Exposing and destroying errors that have hindered God's people from appropriating all that He has to offer as a result of His goodness.

By Troy J. Edwards

**Victorious
Word** 
Christian Fellowship

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This book is dedicated to all of God's Children
who love God and desire the best that He has
for them.

Preface

Because of the many erroneous doctrines that are taught in the church today, so many Christians do not truly understand God's goodness towards them. They do not have a clear or concise definition of what His goodness really is. They often wonder, "What can I expect from God as a result of His goodness."

Promises of answered prayer that seem so plain and clear are given stipulations by religious people - stipulations that have no foundation in Scripture. Things are taught concerning God's goodness that does not seem to even make good sense.

I hope to give a better understanding of what the goodness of God truly is and how it may be appropriated. I try to do this by proving from the Bible itself that many of the teachings in Christian circles that are opposed to the Christian receiving what is truly the goodness of God are in error. Fortunately, I am not alone in seeing these errors in the body of Christ. A Baptist minister wrote the following statement that summarizes the problem:

God desires our good - good for all people. A ghastly idea crept into religion at some point. Folks viewed God as a deity marked by anger and moved by an appetite for appeasement. If not pampered, begged, and cajoled, this God, according to these people, either ignores individuals or inflicts them with diseases and other difficulties. Such a view of God leads to a faith filled with fear, worship laced with anxiety, and a religious life that must be carried as a heavy burden. But the Bible reveals God as one who desires good for all people. Indeed, the whole of the scriptural story - from creation through redemption to the anticipated consummation - accounts for God's plentiful provisions for the benefit of all of the highest order of creation.

God gave people freedom and a will to use it. When people abused their liberty and frustrated the purpose of God, rather than give up on people, God worked to restore the primacy of good. God gave laws as a sign of continuing love. Commandments from God represent God's effort to guide us into lives of dignity and integrity. God's laws aim not at restricting life or depriving anyone of anything good but at moving life toward a fulfillment marked by peace and joy. Deuteronomy 5:29 conveys

the intention of God, "If only they would always feel this way! If only they would always honor me and obey all my commands, so that everything would go well with them and their descendants forever" (GNB). God wants the very best for people, for us.

Jesus, the ultimate revelation of God, embodied God's will for good for everybody. "I have come in order that you might have life---life in all its fullness." Jesus said (John 10:10, GNB). An early follower of Jesus stated this essential truth in a little different manner: "God ... wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4, GNB)

Consider God's most-prized values in interpersonal relationships. God insists that we treat each other at least with justice, all the while nudging us toward faith bent on practicing mercy. At the center of revealed religion, God placed compassion for persons in need, identifying acts of helpfulness with the essence of righteousness. God wants care for all people. Thus, biblical revelation leads to a solid conclusion. God wills life and health, freedom and food, joy and peace, salvation and purpose, for every person. God is our friend, not our enemy. God wills our good. God wills good for everyone. {1}

Basically, what Gaddy is saying is that if one will read the Bible, they will understand that God's true intentions for mankind are for good things and not the misery that so many people face. Therefore, the *unbiblical* errors that we will be discussing are those that prevent God's people from appropriating all that He has for them. People will receive from God based on the knowledge that they have concerning Him. If they are taught that there is no guarantee for them to prosper (whether this prosperity is financial or otherwise is for you to determine), be healed, be delivered from problems and bondages, etc. then they most surely will not waste their time trying.

God is like the best of any earthly Father, He wants to bless His children abundantly. Yet, He has established a law called faith. It is by living within the guidelines of this law that we maintain a relationship with God and also how we appropriate any blessing from Him.

I believe that there are people who have bad health and are in poverty and truly love God. They have an intimate relationship with Him. These people do have faith, but their faith is based on the information that they have concerning their heavenly Father. They have faith to endure their trial with courage and bravery but they limit themselves to this alone. They believe that sickness will draw them

close to God and because He loves them He will be there in their sickness. However, is this good reason to reject healing?

I would never say that the poor and sick have no faith, but their faith is based on what they have been taught. When they read the Bible for themselves, they read it in the "light" of what their pastors have taught them. Therefore, they have faith to know there is a God, and to love Him and to maintain a relationship with Him. They even may have faith to appropriate His joy and peace. They do have faith.

Yet, if they are taught that other blessings are not guaranteed then they can have no faith for them. They will only have faith and appropriate what they know and have been taught what is guaranteed for them to receive from God. Therefore, when someone who opposes me asks, "Sister So and So was a wonderful Christian and she loved the Lord but she died of cancer. Are you saying she has no faith."

Heavens NO! If she loved God she had enough faith to do that. She received God's best in THAT area of her life. I do not criticize and minimize the experience of such precious saints, yet neither do I use their experiences as an excuse to deny that blessings of healing and prosperity are guaranteed for God's people today.

What has happened is, though Sister So and So had a wonderful relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, she was taught some other things that kept her from appropriating in all that was available to her through the gospel because faith comes by hearing and hearing by God's Word. God will only meet you at the level of your faith (Matt. 8:13; 9:29).

It's not His fault because He has provided us the Bible which gives us the information for each area that we need to know His will in. If we base our faith on how others interpret that will then we will either receive faith for that area or we will have none for it.

By dealing with some of the teachings in the church using the light of God's Word, I believe that many of God's people will unlearn some things and gain new understanding concerning God's goodness and all that He desires to do for His own.

I do not write these as a basis for argument. I already know that some who believe some of these errors will disagree with me and try to prove me wrong no matter what I say. I have found throughout my

few years of ministry that when people make up their mind to believe a certain way, there is no convincing them otherwise.

I write this book as a faith builder to those who desire to leave the bondage of tradition, religion, and error. I write to those who know in their hearts that some of the things that they have been taught were wrong but need to know from the Bible how to prove it to themselves, this way they can have faith to receive God's goodness.

May God stir up your faith as you read this book and may He set you free to appropriate all of the blessings He has to offer you as a result of His goodness.

Chapter One

The Goodness of God

"The Lord is GOOD, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."
(Nahum 1:7)

Human Beings are born sinners and some try to become good. Some work hard at being good. It is not so with God. Goodness comes natural to God. He is good. He does not have to work at it.

God's goodness is made visible in what He does for His people. In the passage above the goodness of the Lord is noted for His protecting His people and knowing those who trust Him. God's goodness is not just a theological fact but it is something that can be personally experienced.

Most people, including sinners, believe that God is good. Whenever I talk to sinners concerning their eternal destiny, many of them respond with a statement like this: "I do not believe God would send anyone to hell. He is too good to do that."

They are correct. God is too good to send people to hell. He demonstrates His goodness by sending His only begotten Son to die on the cross (John 3:5-18; Rom. 5:6-8). Out of His goodness He gives each man the choice to either accept or reject His Son. After all, He is too good to force a decision on anyone.

Unfortunately, many reject the provision that Jesus Christ made on the cross for us and they send themselves to hell (John 3:18). They never experience God's goodness even though it is made available to them.

Yet, if you were like me, it was the goodness of God that led us to accept Jesus as our savior. I was in a very bad situation when I cried to the Lord for help. I promised Him that I would give my life to Him if He would help me. He did a miracle on my behalf and I kept my end of the deal.

The Bible shows us that it is the goodness of God that leads one to repentance:

*"Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the **goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.**" (Rom. 2:4)*

I remember one night while doing street ministry I handed a young man a track. On the front of the track it had an ugly picture of the devil with an evil grin on his face and he was standing in the midst of flames. There were words in big bold letters that said "HELL: 1000 DEGREES HOT AND NOT A DROP OF WATER."

This track certainly grabbed this young man's attention. He began to shake from fear and said, "Man I'm scared. I don't want to go there." I told him, "You don't have to go. Jesus died so that you won't have to go. All you need to do is accept Him as your savior and repent of your sins." Still shaking, he told me, "I'm not ready to do that yet, but I'm still scared." I tried persuading him but though he was afraid of hell, he refused to make a decision for Christ. I saw from this incident that fear of eternal punishment does not always lead one to repent.

On the other hand, some years ago, when I was in the Air Force working for a supply unit, I walked into the office and met with one of my co-workers. He appeared to be depressed. Naturally, I began to inquire him to ascertain the source of this depression. He explained to me that he had a bump on his body. He had gone to see the doctor and he thought that it might be cancerous.

I took him outside and began to share the gospel with him. I then *demonstrated* the gospel by laying hands on him (Mark 16:18). I took the authority delegated to believers by Christ and rebuked that which was supposedly attacking his body (Luke 10:17-20). I commanded it to leave in the name of Jesus. He visited the doctor some days later and found that the lump had disappeared. He, his wife, and another couple accepted Jesus Christ as their savior that following weekend in my living room.

In the first incident we saw that fear did not motivate repentance. No doubt that we **MUST** warn people about hell. Some

people really need the "hell" scared out of them. But as we tell them the truth concerning hell we must remember to tell them about God's goodness and His provision for their redemption and deliverance. Fear of punishment has a tendency to wear off after a while. Yet gratitude can last a lifetime. Many people turn to God, not because of fear of punishment, but because they find out that He is the only solution to their problems.

God's People Are Prime Recipients of His Goodness

Some in the Body of Christ have the mistaken idea that after they have become a part of God's kingdom that they are no longer recipients of His goodness. They believe that He puts them through tragedy, sickness, pain, poverty, temptations, and a multitude of trials to either chasten them or strengthen them. Such thinking comes from the EVIL one - Satan.

God's goodness is bestowed on every sinner by giving them a provision for their sin through Jesus Christ. Once we enter into the kingdom of God He does not give us less of His goodness. On the contrary, He gives us even more. He actually stores up goodness for His people:

*"How great is your **GOODNESS!** You have stored it up for those who fear you. You do **GOOD THINGS** for those who **TRUST** you. You do this for all to see." (Ps. 31:19; The Everyday Bible).*

Allow me to reemphasize that God's goodness is not just a theological fact. It is something that is to be experienced. It is demonstrated by what He **DOES** for those who trust Him. The requirement is that you must **TRUST** Him. If you have not been experiencing the goodness of God in your life then this may be an area that certainly needs looking your attention.

These lessons are designed to build your trust and confidence in God concerning His goodness. Many people are not experiencing God's goodness for lack of trust. There are various reasons why they

do not trust God, but all of these reasons come from the pit of hell and must be dealt with.

If you are not experiencing the goodness of God it is not because He has run out of it, withdrawn it, or is holding it back. He has it stored up for you. It is up to each individual to appropriate it for themselves.

Many Christians Lack Revelation of God's Goodness

The main reason many do not experience God's goodness is because they have no true revelation of it. They have sat in church and heard people say that God is good. Yet, in the same church they will hear that God allows sickness, pain, and misery to come into our lives to prepare us for glory. They will hear that God took their little baby or their little child because He wanted a little flower in heaven.

People hear such nonsense in the church and wonder how God could truly be good. Everything that they hear about God in religious circles contradicts their understanding of good. We attach religious explanations to it such as "God works in mysterious ways" or "God knows what is best for us." Yet such an explanation serves to do nothing more than confuse the listener.

If preachers would preach the Bible more often and Christians would learn to study the Bible for themselves instead of taking the word of the preacher or their denominational creed then most of us would begin to have a better concept concerning God's goodness.

In Psalms 107, we are told to give praise to God for His goodness. The Psalm rehearses a number of acts performed by God that demonstrates His goodness towards men. Psalm 107:1 begins with this:

"O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good: for his mercy endureth forever."

Then it goes on to talk about God's redemption of His people and His acts of deliverance in trouble. Then verses 8 and 9 go on to say this:

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his GOODNESS, and his wonderful works to the children of men. For he satisfieth the hungry soul with goodness."

This statement is made four times in this Psalm. It speaks of God's goodness in His delivering people from bondage, healing, protection, and provision.

In verse one the Psalmist tells us that God is good. In verse eight, fifteen, twenty-one, and thirty-one, we are told about His goodness. God is able to extend His goodness towards the children of men because He IS good. A person always acts according to their nature. God is naturally good and His purpose for creating man was to have someone to demonstrate His goodness too.

The Bible tells us about the goodness of God. Religion has a totally different concept of God's goodness than the Bible. Psalm 107 goes into detail concerning what His goodness actually is and how it is demonstrated. The last verse in this Psalm tells us:

*"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall **understand** the lovingkindness of the Lord." (Ps. 107:43)*

It would be wise to observe what the BIBLE says about God's goodness and not what tradition and religion has taught. The reason many do not understand the lovingkindness of God is because they have not observed His acts of goodness towards the children of men. They know that God is supposed to be loving and kind, but few can ever truly say that they consistently experience it. God does not want us to have only an intellectual knowledge of Him. He wants us to EXPERIENCE Him.

The Word of God is written for our benefit. It is written to give us revelation and insight into God's true nature and dealings with men. Its primary purpose is to build our faith in God and not to run us away from Him. Religion and tradition have run many people away from

God, but the truth of God's Word has breaks bondages and has draws people TO the true and living God (John 8:31-36).

Claiming The Promises to Experience God's Goodness

If you desire to experience God's goodness in your life you will have to search out, meditate upon, and claim His promises. The Bible tells us that God's promises are good:

*"Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his **good promise**, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." (1 Kings 8:56)*

*"Not one of all the Lord's **good promises** to the house of Israel failed; every every one was fulfilled." (Josh. 21:45; NIV).*

*You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the **good promises** the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." (Josh. 23:14; NIV).*

God's promises do not fail because God Himself will not fail. If there is any failure in receiving any of God's promises then the failure is on our part, not God's. God does not go back on His promises. He is good so naturally His Word is good:

*"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it **GOOD?**" (Num. 23:19)*

There was a time when a man's word was his bond. Nowadays, people will make and break promises without thinking twice about it. "Promises are made to be broken." I have heard some say. This is MAN'S philosophy. This did not originate from God.

That is why God tells us not to compare Him to a man. *"He is not a man that He should lie."* Lying comes natural to man. God will never do that. If He has spoken a promise He will make it good because He is good. He will do what He said He would do.

Whenever you find a promise from God it should strengthen your faith. It should give you the confidence to know that whatever God says will come to pass in your own personal life.

Yet Satan has fed the church several lies that hinder God's people from claiming and receiving all that He has made available to them. These lies have been taught from the pulpits of many churches. Satan is never more dangerous than when he is able to get into the pulpit. It is there that he is able to do his greatest damage to the church.

In order to restore faith in the TRUTH concerning God's goodness we must find out what God's Word says. God's Word is truth (John 17:17) and Satan is a liar (John 8:44). Anything that contradicts God's Word comes from the pit of hell and is to be discarded as such.

In the lessons ahead, we will deal with some commonly known doctrines that are still being taught in many circles today. These errors keep God's people in bondage and keep them from experiencing the fullness of God's goodness that has been stored up for them. It is the truth of God's Word that will make us completely free (John 8:31-32).

Things can be stored up for a long time and never be claimed. It is not the fault of God since He has made it available to us. We are responsible for obtaining of those things that God has revealed because those things that are revealed belong to us (Deut. 29:29). Lacking this knowledge can lead to our destruction (Hos. 4:6). For our own sakes and of those around us, we must fulfill our God-given responsibility in obtaining knowledge of the truth.

The following chapters will focus on a number of faith destroying doctrines that I kindly label as "errors." In reality, they are outright false teachings because they have no basis in Scripture. As

you see these “errors” in the light of biblical revelation I believe that you will agree with my verdict.

Chapter Two

Error One: God Only Gives SPIRITUAL Blessings

And as people have set and limited opinions about the proper *manner* of prayer, so they have most limited views about the proper subjects for prayer. Some teach that Jews in the Old Testament properly asked for earthly blessings, but that Christians in the New Testament can properly ask only for spiritual blessings! Some think it is wrong to ask for rain, for jobs, for money, or for particular, definite daily bread despite the Saviour's model prayer But Christians need to break away from these traditional limitations on prayer and learn from the Bible that a Christian has a right to pray about anything and everything. {1} - John R. Rice

A doctrine that Satan has used to destroy faith in the goodness of God has been to put all of God's blessings solely on a spiritual plane, influencing Christians to believe that God has no concern for their physical well being. "After all," says the devil, "the spiritual is more important."

This kind of practice is known as *asceticism*. Asceticism is the prohibition of material things. It is outwardly despising anything of a material nature and denying the flesh any of its material desires. You may eat enough food or drink enough water to stay alive but nothing fancy.

Asceticism appears to be *spiritual*, but it certainly is not *biblical* though some may quote Scripture improperly to support it. It derives its origins from a secular Greek philosophical influence upon the scriptures rather than a *Hebraic* understanding of them. Yet, one must keep in mind that the Bible is a Jewish book. {2}

The practice of asceticism is an attempt to assist one in attaining to a certain standard of holiness. Ascetics believed that by depriving oneself of everything but the very basics needs of the body that this equated to holiness. This practice started with the Gnostics in the days of John the Apostle and continued in the Catholic Church. This is the reasons why monks, priests, and nuns take "vows of poverty" as though being poor will make one holier and serve the Lord better. This same thinking crept into the Protestant church and into

some parts of the Pentecostal church and is still around today in some form or another.

To ask God for any real material possession is a SIN to the ascetic. They believe that God will bless you, but His blessings are only of a spiritual nature. They base this on an misinterpretation of Ephesians 1:3:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all SPIRITUAL blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Modern day "ascetics" teach that, "God will bless you spiritually. These blessings are better than anything material." Unfortunately, they often fail to tell you what these spiritual blessings are.

Biblical Rules of Interpretation

There are certain rules in Bible interpretation. One rule is to interpret Scripture in the light of other Scriptures. You can take any Scripture out of it's setting and prove anything. I will be using the Bible rule I have just shown you to prove the error of ascetic thinking. Perhaps the light of God's Word will bring you understanding and set you free from this so that you will have no trouble trusting God for material necessities and desires.

In the first chapter we received insight into the nature of God's goodness. We learned from Psalm 31:19 that God's goodness is stored up for us. Let us read this Scripture again but this time from the Living Bible:

"Oh, how great is your goodness to those who publicly declare that you will rescue them. For you have stored up great BLESSINGS for those who trust and reverence you."

In Ephesians 1:3 we see that you have spiritual blessings in heavenly places. If we look at this along with Psalm 31:19 we will see that heaven is only the storage place for these blessings. Heaven is not a material place. It is a place in the spirit realm. There are two realms - the spiritual and the material.

You and I live in the material realm and have need of material things. However all material things have its source in the SPIRITUAL. All material things are patterned after the spiritual.

Now what you and I must do is get the blessings that God has stored up for us from the spiritual into the material. These blessings must "come down":

"Every good and every perfect gift is FROM ABOVE, and COMETH DOWN from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17).

All of God's blessings find their source in heaven. They originate with the Father. Yet as we pray and stand on God's Word, He sends these things "down" to us and they manifest themselves in the physical realm.

When God created Adam and Eve he placed them in a beautiful material garden which He created. In this garden they had everything that they could ever need or desire. Even after they sinned He continued to provide for their material needs by giving them coats of skin.

Tithing: A Key To Receiving God's Blessings

Everything that is on earth has been created by God. The earth is His and it's fullness (Gen. 14:19, 22; Ps. 24:1; 89:11). He even owns all of the gold and silver on it (Hag. 2:8). He gives the earth to the children of men (Ps.115:16). Therefore all of the material things we would deny ourselves have its origin in God. To call what God created as "evil" is to say that God gives evil things when He has told us that His gifts are GOOD and PERFECT.

In order to get the blessings of God from heaven to the earth we must claim His promises by fulfilling the conditions and standing on His Word. An example of this is the blessings promised as we bring our tithes and offerings to God:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a BLESSING, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3:10)

God wants us to prove His Word by DOING IT. We prove that something is true by doing it and then we see the results. When we give the portion of our income that is required by God He promises to do something in return. He promises first to open heaven's windows. After that He promises to pour out a blessing.

So we can see from Malachi that God's blessings have their origin in heaven or in the spirit realm. When we do what He requires in His Word, these things are given to us in the earth realm.

In Deuteronomy chapter 28, God promises blessings to the obedient:

"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." (Deut. 28:2)

I like that. If you and I are obedient to God then we do not even have to run after the blessings. They will come on us and they will overtake us. God does abundantly above anything you and I could ever ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

As we read this chapter we find that these blessings are MATERIAL. In here you see blessings of fruitfulness, abundance, protection, direction, victory, success, holiness, riches, and dominion. Many will tell you that these blessings were for the Jews only but we will deal with this subject in a later chapter.

Deuteronomy also shows us that these blessings listed in chapter 28 originate from heaven:

"The Lord will open the heavens, THE STOREHOUSE OF HIS BOUNTY, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none." (Deut. 28:12; NIV)

In Psalm 31:19 we saw that God has our blessings stored up for us. Here in Deuteronomy 28 we see that the heavens are the storehouse. We also see that it is by obedience to His Word that this storehouse is opened up to us and His blessings come upon us.

When we begin to see that we have been given "spiritual blessings" in heavenly places we will recognize that heaven is the source, or the storehouse, where all of our blessings are located. But they were not meant to stay there. You and I must claim these blessings and get them from the spirit realm into the physical realm.

Prayer: Another Key For Appropriating Blessings

Prayer is also the key to getting our spiritual blessings from heaven into the earth. In what is commonly known as the Lord's prayer, Jesus teaches to pray for our MATERIAL needs:

"After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread....." (Matt. 6:9-11)

God is our FATHER. A true father has no pleasure in the suffering of his children. God compares Himself with earthly fathers and tells us that He would do much more than even they who are born with a sinful nature (Matt. 7:7-11).

God is more than willing to provide for our material needs or our Lord Jesus Christ would not have told us to pray after this manner. God does not waste words and give false hopes. He means what He says. If He tells you to do something then you can expect results. If He tells you to pray after a certain manner then you can expect that prayer to be answered after that manner.

Further on in this same chapter Jesus deals with worry and material needs. Jesus tells us not to "take any thought" or in other words do not worry or be anxious. What is He telling us not to worry about? He tells us not to worry about material things such as food, drink, or clothing. Why? "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things?" (Matt. 6:32).

He says our Father knows that we have NEED of them. The ascetics will tell you that you do not need them. They tell us that we must learn to "deny our flesh." They also claim that "only the spiritual blessings count. You are not guaranteed any physical blessings because they are not God's best for you."

While one must certainly "deny oneself" in relation to sin and submission to our Lord (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23), the ascetic goes beyond this truth and perverts it by teaching that we are to deny ourselves those things that God has promised to bless us with, thus teaching error.

We are thankful that God is not an ascetic. He not only wants to bless us both materially and spiritually, He gives us His guarantee that we can receive these blessings:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU." (Matt. 6:33)

The kingdom of God represents His rule and His government in our lives. If we focus on God and His plans and purposes then we are GUARANTEED to have every spiritual and material resource that we will ever need. He is a Father to those of us who have accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior. He is concerned and has made provision for every area of our being: spirit, soul, and body.

If we focus on the spiritual then we are guaranteed the material. Jesus sometimes ministered forgiveness of sins before He healed the body (Mark 2:1-12). The forgiveness was a SPIRITUAL blessing that manifested itself in the physical by producing bodily healing. We are to minister this same way (James 5:13-16).

Paul shows us that God is interested in our physical as well as our spiritual needs:

"But my God shall supply ALL your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19)

Paul was writing to those who had sown MATERIALLY into his ministry (Phil. 4:15-18). Therefore, if we keep the Scripture in context, we see that Paul would have to be referring to our material needs being supplied.

The word "all" covers a wide span. It does not say "all your spiritual need" and neither does it say "all your material need" it says "all your need." This word "all" covers both material and spiritual.

How is He going to do it? According to His RICHES IN GLORY! Whenever a Christian goes home to be with the Lord we sometimes say that the person went to "glory." In other words, that person went to heaven.

Ephesians 1:3 says that our spiritual blessings are in heavenly places. God's riches are in GLORY or in HEAVENLY PLACES. God will supply our need ACCORDING to these riches. Our Father is rich. When we obey God then these riches will MANIFEST themselves in a material way. The word "manifest" simply means to go from one realm into another. That's what happens when God supplies our need. He brings them from the heavenly spiritual realm into the material.

Not Limited to only Our Needs

These blessings are not just limited to our "needs." Paul tells us in the book of Romans that God will give us ALL things:

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us ALL things." (Rom. 8:32)

There is another form of asceticism that teaches that God will supply our needs, not our wants (desires). We will deal with this area in more detail in a later chapter. But for now we can see that God wants to give us ALL things. There is no limit to the storehouse of His bounty because there is no limit with God. If He does not have it He certainly has the ability to create it.

Holiness does not come from denying ourselves material blessings. It does not come from "afflicting" our bodies and suffering needlessly. Holiness comes from faith in the power of God's Word to deliver us from sin and to teach us right from wrong (Ps. 119:9-11; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6).

As we follow the LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT we are guaranteed not to fulfill the LUSTS of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-25). There is a big difference between "lusts" and "desires." Man has a natural desire for food, clothing, and other material possessions. It becomes "lust" when we have what we need and we desire more than is lawful or we feel that we must have something we are not supposed to have. The power of the Holy Spirit will prevent us from going the route of lust.

Sometimes the "only spiritual blessings" doctrine is used to excuse our doubt and unbelief. Sometimes we lack the desire to stand against the devil and believe God for what we have asked Him for. If it seems to take a long period of time manifesting, we easily give up and develop such doctrines as an excuse for our laziness.

When one has been blinded by tradition it is hard to see the plain literal truth of the Scriptures. All divine healing promises are replaced with "spiritual healing." All promises of prosperity are replaced with "spiritual prosperity." We tend to add to God's Word by our traditions and make His Word non effective in our lives (Mark 7:13). When we learn to take God's Word for what it says, without adding or taking away from it, we will get the results that are promised in the Word (Luke 5:1-7).

Chapter Three

Error Two: We Will Get All Blessings In The Sweet By And By

Trust is not a belief that God *can* bless, that he *will* bless, but that he *does* bless here and now. {1} - Bounds, E. M. (Italics his)

This error is just as dangerous and subtle as the last one. It too borders on asceticism. It preys upon sincere Christians who truly love the Lord and care nothing about anything except furthering His kingdom.

Yet it breaks the heart of God to watch such loving and faithful children suffer needlessly because they are denied all that has been made available in this life as well as the life to come. They suffer because they do not expect, and even believe that it is a sin to expect any reward upon the earth.

The "sweet by and by" error teaches that we will both receive all blessings such as healing, prosperity, and complete victory when we either get to heaven or during the millennium when Jesus is physically ruling and reigning upon the earth for a thousand years. Some Scriptures that are used to support this view are Matt. 6:19-21, Col. 3:1-2, and 1 Pet. 1:4. There are more but these are enough for the moment.

The "sweet by and by" error is only half true. In Heavenly mathematics a half truth equals a WHOLE LIE. Satan Has destroyed many Christians for years with "half truths."

In the Garden of Eden he deceived Eve with a half truth. He told her that when she ate of the fruit that she and Adam would be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5). That was true. However, he lied about the part that they would not die (Gen. 2:17; 3:4).

On the other hand he tried to get Jesus to commit suicide based on a half truth. He quoted Psalm 91:11-12 out of its context. This Scripture was a promise of protection from God but Satan tried to get Jesus to apply it incorrectly. Jesus caught on to it and reminded Satan of the WHOLE truth (Matt. 4:5-7).

Satan preys upon Christians with half truths. When we look at the whole truth and apply it then we are victorious over the devil. In this case of the "sweet by and by" we will receive many rewards and treasures in heaven for serving the Lord (1 Cor. 3:12-16) and many blessings during the millennium (Rev. 20).

However, the Bible makes it clear that we will receive many wonderful material and spiritual blessings in THIS LIFE also. In Mark 10 a rich man came to Jesus inquiring as to how he may receive eternal life. This man had kept the Ten Commandments all his life.

Yet Jesus could see that the man was still in bondage to his many great possessions. When Jesus told him to give them all up and follow Him, the man could not do it. If you cannot give up something for Jesus then you are in bondage to that thing. God does not mind you having great possessions, but if those great possessions have YOU, then He minds. You cannot worship both God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Jesus told the disciples that it was a difficult thing for a rich man to enter into the kingdom. He did not say it was IMPOSSIBLE. Only difficult. The reason it is difficult is because most rich people have a tendency to trust in their money more than God. Some people feel that if they are rich then they do not need God.

Nevertheless, this amazed the disciples. Think about this for a moment. Tradition says that the disciples were poor. If that were true then they should have been overjoyed at Jesus' statement. On the contrary they were astonished. Why? Because they were not as poor as tradition leads us to believe.

This statement must have given Peter much concern because he points out the fact that they had left ALL to follow him. If they were so poor, he would not have needed to make such a statement. Jesus relieves Peter's concern with a promise that destroys the "sweet by and by" error:

*"And Jesus answered and said, verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold **now in this time**, houses, and*

brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30)

Jesus said we will receive NOW in this time. Why wait to get your blessings in the sweet by and by when they are available right here in the "sweet now and now."

The Living Bible paraphrases the latter part of verse 30 like this: "*.....All these will be his HERE ON THE EARTH, and in the world to come he shall have eternal life.*" You see what that poor rich man missed out on. He could have had a hundred times better than what he had if he would have given up all his possessions for Jesus.

There has been some controversy over the meaning of this particular passage of Scripture. Some have taken this passage to literally mean that we can claim from God 100 houses, and brothers, etc. Others do not believe that Jesus is speaking this way. I certainly do not deny that God will bless us in this lifetime with material as well as spiritual blessings and I endeavor to prove this in this book. However, I have some difficulty believing that our Lord is teaching us that every believer should reap 100 times more physical property that was given for the sake of the kingdom.

The **New Living Translation** says, "*will receive now in return, a **hundred times over**, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property – with persecutions.*" **J.B. Phillips Translation** and the **Jewish New Testament** also says "*a hundred times over.*" I believe that God will bless us 100 times over, or another way to say this is "100 times better" than what we give up for His sake (in the case of missionaries who have left all to serve in a foreign country, etc.) in this lifetime, but not 100 **additional** houses, brothers, sisters, etc. A.S. Worrell, a Greek scholar, also seems to agree with this translation. In his notes he makes this comment concerning Mark 10:30: "A hundredfold; blessings a hundred times as valuable as those given for Jesus." {2} And the most wonderful aspect of this is that it will occur in this lifetime.

Nonetheless, our Lord shows us that there are two kinds of rewards, those that we receive in heaven and those which we receive while we are still on the earth. We can expect to receive these with persecutions. Rich or poor, we will be persecuted either way.

Personally I can handle persecution a whole lot better when I am prosperous, how about you?

Other passages make it clear that we can receive all that God has for us while we are still alive on the earth.

"Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." (Prov. 11:31)

That which you sow is what you will reap, whether it is good or bad. You and I can have the joy that our reaping of righteousness will be done upon the earth in this age.

Many blessings of the righteous are mentioned in Proverbs 10. They have deliverance from death, never famish (starve to death), BLESSINGS upon their head, they walk securely, their DESIRES are granted, they have an everlasting foundation, their hope is gladness, God is their strength and stronghold (protection), they will never be removed, and wisdom from their mouths. Other Scriptures show that the righteous have guaranteed answers to all of their prayers (Prov. 15:16; James 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:12).

All of these blessings will be recompensed to us upon the earth. We do not have to wait until we get to heaven or until the millennium to get them.

When we give to the poor, we will be blessed for our giving here upon the earth:

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him into the hands of his enemies." (Psalm 41:1-2)

I can personally testify to the truth of this Scripture. This ministry has financially blessed ministries in poor countries such as India and the Philippines. God has never failed to meet our need nor

our desires. We have received an abundant return for our giving to the poor.

God really and truly cares about the poor and expects you and I to bless them. But we cannot bless the poor if we are in poverty ourselves. One must be blessed in order to be a blessing. You should desire material wealth if for no other reason than to fulfill God's commandment to take care of the poor.

God's principle for blessing us financially upon the earth is by our giving. God makes a wonderful promise concerning giving in Luke 6:38:

*"Give, and **IT** shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall **men** give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."*

What is the **IT** that will be given to you? "It" is that which you GIVE. If you LOVE, you will get love. If you give TIME, you will get time. If you give MONEY, you will get money.

Notice that MEN shall give into your bosom. This would have to happen right here on earth. In heaven you will already have everything that you will ever need or desire. You will need no man to give you anything. However, on earth God uses men and women to accomplish His purposes. So it is on earth that you will receive your reward for your giving.

We want to experience the blessings of the Lord right now. We want them in our lifetime. David makes this statement concerning God's goodness:

*"I had fainted, unless I had **believed** to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." (Psalm 27:13)*

It was not in the land of the "sweet by and by" that David believed to see the goodness of the Lord. In heaven, you are no longer "living." You are what is considered "dead" where THIS life is concerned. The land of the living is here on the earth.

We saw in Previous lessons that God's goodness has been stored up for us (Ps. 31:19). It is not stored up waiting until we get to heaven. It is stored up for us and awaiting us to claim it right here upon the earth, in the land of the living.

This Psalm shows us why so many people fail and give up. They do not believe that they will see God's goodness in this lifetime. David believed to see God's goodness in the land of the living and he did. If you and I will believe God for the same thing then we will get the same results.

God's Goodness Not Seen Due to Unbelief

The primary reason for failing to see the goodness of the Lord is due to a lack of faith. Faith can only go as far as one's knowledge of God's Word. If one does not believe that God's goodness is available for them NOW, they will not step out in bold faith and claim what is rightfully theirs.

The history of Israel provides an illustration of this. God delivered Israel from Egypt, the land of bondage, and made promises concerning the land that He would give them (Exodus 13:5-11; 20:12; 23:30; 33:1; Lev. 14:34; 20:24; 23:10). These events were recorded to provide examples for present day believers (1 Cor. 10:1-11). Therefore, we are at liberty to draw some lessons from them.

Egypt is a type of the world while Pharaoh is a type of the devil. Egypt kept Israel in bondage and until God redeemed them by the blood of a lamb (Ex. 12). This is a "type" of our redemption from the world and from the devil by the blood of Jesus (John 17:9-23; Col. 1:12-14).

They spent 40 years in the wilderness due to their lack of faith in God to bring them into the Promised Land (Num. 13 and 14). This is a type of the immature Christian who wanders about aimlessly in life with no purpose for God. This person misses out on the best that God has for them.

Finally, the next generation of Israelites made it into the Promised Land that is Canaan.

Many people have taught and many songs portray Canaan as a type of heaven. This could not be true because there were enemies in this land (Ex. 23:27-33; 33:1-2; 34:11-17). There will be no enemies in heaven (Revelation 21 and 22) therefore this could not be a type of heaven.

Canaan was a type of the rights and privileges that belong to every born again believer. It is also a type of the spiritual warfare that every believer must engage in order to possess these things (Read Joshua).

Making Canaan a type of heaven has contributed to the "sweet by and by" error. People believed that they would see their promised land in heaven. You can have it right here on earth if you are willing to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12) and take possession of what God says is already yours.

God's Will on Earth to Match That of Heaven

One last thing that proves the "sweet by and by" doctrine to be erroneous is the fact that God tells us clearly that He wants His will done on earth as it is in heaven:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."
(Matt. 6:9-10).

God wants His will done on earth as it is in heaven. But why does it not just happen automatically if it's His will? Why must we pray for this to be done?

The reason is that there are enemies on the earth - Satan and his evil forces. These enemies labor strenuously in their attempts to hinder God's will from being done on the earth just as the enemies in Canaan attempted to hinder the will of God in having His people possess the land. These enemies are defeated but our faith appropriates the victory that Jesus has purchased by His blood.

We find more proof of this in Deuteronomy. God commands the people of Israel to obey His commandments, and for good reason:

"That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth." (Deut. 11:21).

In heaven there is no lack, sickness, sin, or any other negative thing that we experience on earth. These things that are in heaven are given by God on earth as well. This is the will of God for you. You need not wait for the sweet by and by to get heaven's blessings when you can experience most of them right here on earth in this lifetime.

Conclusion

Our focus should be on heaven (Col. 3:1-2) but that does not mean that God will not bless us abundantly on the earth. When we focus on GOD rather than *THINGS*, then we will receive material well as spiritual blessings in this life (Matt. 6:25-33).

It is true that many Christians must get beyond the point of asking "what can God do for ME?" and begin asking more "what can I do for God?"

The difference between the *carnal minded* individual and the *spiritually minded* one is that the spiritually minded Christian keeps his or her mind filled and focused on God and His Word. The Carnal person has his or her mind focused on everything else but God and His Word (1 Cor. 2:12-16; 3:1-4).

There must be balance in all things. We cannot go to the extreme of becoming materialistic or the other extreme of being so "spiritual" that we deny ourselves material blessings. The "sweet by and by error" has put too many sincere Christians in bondage. However, if we learn the truth concerning it, this truth will make us free (John 8:32).

Chapter Four

Error Three: God Only Supplies Our Needs, Not Our WANTS

Every Christian ought to get his heart's desires and his prayers in accord. Anything you have a right to want, you have a right to pray for. If you do not have a right to pray for it, then it is wrong to want it. About any particular matter, the Christian ought to ask for what he wants, or quit wanting it.[1] – John R. Rice

In the King James Version of the Bible the word "want" usually implies "lack" (example: Psalm 23:1.) In modern day English when we hear someone say that they "want" something it is usually in reference to something that they desire. We do not often use this word to imply a "lack" in the sense that we "need" it.

Religious people telling you that God will supply your needs but He will not give you your desires. This is usually based on Philippians 4:19. This is another half truth.

The first problem with the “needs only” error is the selective Scripture quotation (while ignoring other passages of Scripture on the matter. The “needs only” advocates seem to believe that Philippians 4:19 is the only promise God had recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, their bias theology has blinded them to the full understanding of this most wonderful passage of Scripture.

God’s Supplies Far Beyond *Basic* Needs

Paul is not telling the people that God is parsimonious and will only supply their very basic needs as some of the “needs only” proponents imply. This passage, when studied carefully, teaches us that God will take care of our needs in proportion to His abundant wealth. In other words, you don’t just get the basic “bread and water” from God, but you get PLENTY from His storehouse. Look at Phil. 4:19 in some different English translation:

And my God will liberally supply (fill to the full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Amplified)

But my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Darby)

My God will richly fill your every need in a glorious way through Christ Jesus. (God's Word to the Nations)

But my God--so great is His wealth of glory in Christ Jesus--will fully supply every need of yours. (Weymouth)

You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus. (The Message)

An older translation of this passage states Phil. 4:19 in the most wonderful way:

And my God fill all your desire, by his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [Forsooth my God full-fill all your desire, after his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.] (Wycliff New Testament)

In this chapter, we will demonstrate from other passages of Scripture that the Wycliffe translators were not as far off as some might lead us to believe.

Phil. 4:19 (the KJV interpreted with a limited understanding) is erroneously used by the “needs only” doctrinaires to limit God’s abundance in the life of His children. A theology that limits God in

areas where He has placed none will actually limit Him in those areas in the lives of those who accept and believe it (Ps. 78:41).

Far too many Christians have bought into this doctrine and accepted the lie that God has chosen not to bless them with any more than their basic necessities. They do not realize that it is THEY who limit God in how much He will bless them (Luke 7:30).

As we continue in this study you will see that God does not adhere to the “needs only” theology. He is a very generous God who not only supplies our needs in abundance, but also loves to give us the [godly] desires of our hearts.

In Luke 15 Jesus tells the familiar story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). It was the story of a man who had two sons. One of the sons decided to get his inheritance early. He then wasted it. After realizing his foolishness he went back to his father seeking forgiveness.

The father was so happy for the return of his son that he gave him the best clothes and had a party for him. Now the older son found out about all of it and was very upset. He would not join the celebration. When the father confronted him about it he accused the father of being unfair and never giving him any of the things he gave his wayward son. Then the father makes this astounding statement:

"And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, AND ALL THAT I HAVE IS THINE." (Luke 15:31).

The elder son had limited his father in what he could have had. Of course we know that the elder son had served his father faithfully and all of his basic needs were being met. Yet there was much more available to this son. ALL that his father had was available to him.

It is well taught that the father is a type of our Heavenly Father and the prodigal son is a type of the backslidden Christian returning to God or the sinner seeking repentance. This is a beautiful message teaching the love and forgiveness of our Father in heaven.

But if that was all God would have had us to learn from this then the story would have stopped at the prodigal son's restoration. Yet further in the story we see the elder son who is a type of the Christian

who has faithfully served God for many years but has no joy in seeing their backslidden brother return to Christ. They become jealous because God is actually showering that "sinner" with blessings.

But the Father's message to all of his children is found in Luke 15:31, "All that I have is thine." If we are not getting more from God than just our basic needs met then it is because that is all that we have believed Him for. He has much more and has made it available to us.

The fault can be found in the pulpit. I have actually sat in the pulpit and listened to ministers preach the "needs only" error. It has made me cringe on the inside because I knew God better than that.

Information is very important. The type of information you hear will determine what you will have faith for (Rom. 10:17). It is our desire in this lesson to give you accurate and *biblical* information.

There are numerous passages of Scripture that prove the "needs only" doctrine to be erroneous. We will touch on a few.

"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him. Oh fear the Lord, you his saints! There is no want to those that fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those that seek the Lord shall not lack ANY GOOD THING." (Ps. 34:8-10; NKJV)

The word "any" means "no restrictions of any kind. Whatever is desired or needed. Indiscriminate of what is wanted." God wants to give us good things of all kind, not just basic necessities.

The reason many Christians find this difficult to believe is because they have not received a revelation of the goodness of God. God invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is Good." We have not all "tasted" of His goodness and we therefore limit Him in what He desires to do for us.

God shows us in His Word that He wants not only to supply our needs but to give us the desires of our hearts:

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the DESIRES of thine heart." (Ps. 37:4)

Notice that this Scripture makes it plain and clear that God will give you your DESIRES. Anything less is limiting Him and putting Him in a religious box. But when we do this it is we who miss out, not Him.

Proverbs 10:24 gives us a similar promise:

"The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the DESIRE of the righteous shall be granted." (Prov. 10:24)

Now these promises are of course conditional. Psalm 34 tells us that we must "seek" the Lord. Psalm 37 tells us that we must delight ourselves in Him. Proverbs 10 assumes that we are not living wickedly but righteously. In other words, a true Christian will not have any ridiculous, ungodly desire.

No *true* Christian will DESIRE a pound of cocaine, to sleep with a prostitute, or any other thing that God has made clear to be sin and an abomination to Him. Yet there are many "good things" that may not be classified by some as "spiritual" that God says are ours if we desire them.

Religion has certainly painted the wrong picture of God for us. We often think of God as a stern Father who only wants us to go about doing His business, suffer for the kingdom, and leave the PLEASURES alone. As a fair trade He will insure that you have *some* clothes (perhaps second hand), *some* food (nothing fancy), and shelter (a nice SHACK).

Of course God does want us to be about His business. Of course you and I will suffer for the kingdom's sake. However, God wants us to get some PLEASURE out of life as well:

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly ALL THINGS TO ENJOY." (1 Tim. 6:17)

God has no problem with His people being rich. He only commands that we be not highminded and not to trust in the riches themselves. They are uncertain. If we are not trusting God then the stock market could crash tomorrow and your bank account could go from several million to zero.

Yet in relation to that He reminds those that are rich that it is HE who gives us richly all things to enjoy. He never tells us not to enjoy our material blessings. Just do not be highminded and put trust in them.

God does not want to supply only your basic needs. He wants you to ENJOY some things too. At Christmas time I buy my children many things that they "want." They do not always need them (and I certainly do not NEED to spend my hard earned money on them). Yet most parents would think me to be cruel if I had a sufficient amount of money but never bought my children any thing for Christmas.

Yet God says He is willing to do above what an earthly father would do for his children (Matt. 7:7-11). Look at something else the Bible says:

"How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them to drink of the river of thy PLEASURES." (Ps. 36:7-8)

God does not just supply needs but He also provides some pleasures. In fact, He has a whole river of them. The word "fat" in this Scripture is speaking of "abundance." God gives abundance to our satisfaction. God wants to bestow upon us pleasures as well as supply our needs.

We were created to experience pleasure. But pleasure was never meant to be sought as an end in itself. This is the problem with the world. They worship the pleasing things that God created rather than worship the Creator Himself. When we seek God, and not pleasure, we will receive more pleasure than we can handle.

We have to learn to believe what the Bible has to say about our Father rather than what religion says. We must learn to have intimate

fellowship with each member of the Godhead so that we can wipe away all of this religiosity and learn to trust Him for ALL things.

Faith and Prayer: Keys to Receiving Our Desires

Now that we have established from Scripture that God is willing to bless us beyond our basic needs, we can now learn the proper method for appropriating those things we desire. It is by faith and prayer that we appropriate God's unlimited blessings on our behalf.

We have seen in previous lessons that God has His goodness stored in heavens' banks waiting for you to appropriate it. If you have grasped this truth then you will have no problems believing that God grants us our [godly] desires on the basis of faith and prayer. Jesus taught us that if we are abiding in Him and His Word is abiding in us, then we are to ask for whatever we want:

*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask **what ye will**, and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7)*

According to *Thayer's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the word "will" used in the above passage can mean "to desire, to wish, to love, to like to do a thing, be fond of doing, to take delight in, have pleasure." [2]

Some English translations translate the passage in several ways: "ye will ask **whatever ye may want**" (A Conservative Version), "you* will ask **whatever you* desire**" (Analytical-Literal Translation), "then **anything** for which you make a request will be done for you" (Bible in Basic English), "whatsoever ye may be **desiring**, ask! and it shall be brought to pass for you" (Emphasized Bible), "then you can ask for **anything you want**" (Easy to Read Version), "then you will ask for **anything you wish**, and you shall have it. (Good News Bible), "then ask for **anything you want**, and it will be yours." (God's Word).

Kenneth Wuest's translation shows that in the Greek, Jesus is actually commanding His people to ask for their "wants":

"If you maintain a living communion with me and my words are at home in you, I command you to ask, at once, something for yourself, whatever your heart desires, and it will become yours." (John 15:7; The New Testament: An Expanded Translation by Kenneth S. Wuest)

It should be clear to the reader that we are not to limit our petitions to God to only our basic needs. We are to ask for "anything, whatever, whatsoever" we "wish, want, desire." To limit God in the way that some have taught us is disobedience to a clear command of our Lord.

Jesus not only commanded us to ask for whatever we wanted, but He ensured us that we need not place limits on what we want. Furthermore, He gave us another wonderful secret for ensuring the appropriation of our desires:

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in MY NAME, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask ANYTHING in my name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14)

When Jesus rose from the grave all authority was given unto Him in HEAVEN and in earth (Matt. 28:18). The name of Jesus has authority in heaven where the goodness of God is laid up for us. It is in this name that we pray. Only those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus have the right to use this name. Heaven recognizes the authority of this name and those who have been given the legal covenant right to use it and it yields whatever the desired request is.

We are by no means forcing the hand of God by using this name. It is the answer of our prayers that GLORIFY the Father. There is as much in it for Him as it is for us. One of the ways that answered prayer glorifies God is by showing the world He is not the cruel taskmaster that some make Him to be. It shows them He is a loving and kind Father who delights in blessing His children.

Notice the word "anything" in this passage. Again we see the limitlessness of what we are allowed to ask from God. We can ask ANYTHING. Not only may we ask but we have Jesus guarantee that the Father will give it to us.

God tells us that we can ask anything for ourselves and it will become ours; whatever it is that our heart desires. This can cover a lot of things, within a godly spectrum of course. But we are not just limited to what we need.

It continues to get better as read more:

"...that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." (John 15:16)

"Whatsoever" is what we are guaranteed to get. This word covers a broad spectrum of things that we can pray for with a guarantee of receiving. Unlike men, God does not lie and neither does He change His mind. If He says that He will do it then He will.

Only man puts limitations on this by making statements such as "this is only referring to "spiritual things" or this is only referring to "whatsoever things that you need." Eve caused problems for herself and the rest of us by adding and taking away from the Word of God. The same continues to happen when people say things that God did not say. God has put no limits on what we can ask for and neither should anyone else.

John shows us that the main reason for these unlimited prayer privileges is for our JOY:

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL." (John 16:23-24)

Jesus gives us a guarantee of receiving because He wants our JOY to be full. Doesn't it make you happy when your children are happy? Doesn't it bring you joy to see your children's smiling faces

when you bless them with that thing that they have always wanted? Doesn't it delight you to hear them say, "You're great Mom/Dad. Thanks!"?

Just as we want our children to enjoy life, God wants you and I to enjoy life also. The Christian life should not be one of drudgery and constantly "wishing I could have but I dare not ask." God gives us ALL things to enjoy. Isn't it about time that through prayer we partake of some of them.

I believe that it just tickles our heavenly Father pink to see His children praising and worshipping Him. It just makes Him want to bless us ever the more. WE have to get in our minds that God WANTS to bless His children:

"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father Himself LOVETH you, because ye loved me, and have believed that I came out of God." (John 16:26-27)

He loves YOU. He loves ME. He wants to bless us abundantly with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Oh, the love of God. Oh, the goodness of God. If only the church would realize what God has stored up for her she would not be so sick, defeated, and divided.

Satan through tradition and religion has fed the church many errors that destroy faith and bring bondage. BY using God's Word we can destroy these lies, break the bondages, and restore faith in the love and goodness of our Heavenly Father.

Chapter Five

Error Four: *All Prayer Requests Must End With "If It Be Thy Will"*

It has been well said that if you want to feed a dog poison, put it on a piece of meat. Satan has learned this trick very well. He feeds God's people poison by putting it on a piece of truth. Many errors that are taught in the body of Christ are based on portions of truth. Satan knows that he cannot sell most of God's people a complete lie.

The "If it be thy will" error has so much truth to it that you can go into error one way or another. We can either go into error by believing that ALL prayer requests must include the statement "if it be thy will" or we can go to another extreme that is just as dangerous by never seeking the will of God in certain matters.

Making the statement "If it be thy will" is dependent on what you are praying about. You will never find a Scripture in the Bible that says God has called you to go to India as a missionary, to become a pastor, evangelist, etc., or any thing of such nature. That is when you have to seek God's will.

Anyone who refuses to seek the will of God in these areas can expect no blessing from God (Prov. 27:1; James 4:13-17). They are praying from selfish motives and asking God to bless things He did not ordain. They do not even have a guarantee that they will live the next day to see their plans fulfilled.

However, when we pray in line with God's will for us then we have a **GUARANTEE** that our prayers will be answered:

*"And this is the **confidence** that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (1 John 5:14-15)*

The confidence you gain that you have a sure answer to your prayer request is the fact that you prayed in line with the will of God. God promises that when you do this then He will hear you. If He has heard you are guaranteed an answer. There are times when God chooses not hear and you can bet there will be no answer (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 21:13; Isa. 59:1-2).

There are two ways to know the will of God. One of the ways is through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He lives in you and Jesus promised that He [The Holy Spirit] would guide you into all truth and show you all things that God has for you (John 14:26; 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:12).

Usually when we are asking God if it is His will to do something or have something we are usually desiring the Holy Spirit to reveal to us God's desires in the areas we are seeking Him for. However, most people have used the "if it be thy will" statement as some sort of a lucky charm. They are "hoping" that God will do or give them what they are asking but they are not CONFIDENT that He will. This is a wavering person and that person can expect to receive nothing from God (James 1:5-8).

The other way to know the will of God is to pray in line with His Word:

*"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what **ye will**, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7)*

Let's read again Wuest's translation of this passage:

"If you maintain a living communion with me and my words are at home in you, I command you to ask, at once, something for yourself, whatever your heart desires, and it will become yours." (John 15:7; The New Testament: An Expanded Translation by Kenneth S. Wuest)

A.B. Simpson who was the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church made this statement: "How shall we know God's will? At least, we may always know it by His Word and His promise. We may be sure we are not transcending its infinite bounds if we ask anything that is covered by a promise of His Holy Word." [1]

The problem with people who always end their prayers with "if it be thy will" do not take time to search the Word to first find out what the will of God is in the area that they are praying in.

I personally do not like "hits and misses." I like GUARANTEED things. I am not going to waste my time praying about anything that I am not sure that I am going to get. I like to know that when I give my requests to God that I am sure of an answer. Yet you can have this confidence of a GUARANTEED answer if you will take time to search and meditate on the Word of God.

When the Bible gives no clear and definite promise concerning the thing that you are praying about, then it is essential to ask God to reveal His will to you concerning the subject. However, when there is a clear, definite promise in the Bible concerning the thing that you need or desire then you need not ask God about His will. It has already been revealed to you through His Word.

When you pray in line with the definite promises in God's Word you are guaranteed a "yes" answer to your prayer:

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20)

The great evangelist of the last century, **D.L. Moody** is quoted as saying: "Faith takes God without any 'ifs'. If God says anything, faith says, 'I believe it'; faith says, 'Amen' to it." [2] A close friend of Moody's, R.A. Torrey made a similar statement when he wrote: "...when you have a definite promise in God's Word you do not need to put any "ifs" before it. All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. They are absolutely sure, and if you plead any promise in God's Word you need not put any "ifs" in your petition." [3]

God has given to us "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:3-4). These promises are His will for us. God has already said "yes" to any promise He has made in His Word before you ever even

pray for it. Although you should still bring the promise before God to remind Him of it (Isa. 43:25-26), we need not ask Him if it is His will to give us something that He has already said that He would do.

The word "amen" is not just the classic way to end a prayer. This word is a statement of faith. It means "so let it be." When you say this you are telling God that you know that your request is answered.

When you pray in accordance with God's promises then you can end your prayers with an "amen" instead of an "if it be thy will." You can end your prayer with a statement of confidence instead of one that implies a lack of assurance.

Is It Selfish To Ask God for Blessings?

Some say that it is selfish to ask God for His blessings. They accuse us of "seeking His hand instead of His face." They think that to pray specifically for something with confidence is a sin. Yet God has promised us several benefits and tells us not to forget them:

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's"
(Ps. 103:2-5)*

These are some wonderful benefits that God has promised to give us. They belong to us. They are the will of God for us. They can be claim through faith and prayer. We are told not to forget them. Therefore it cannot be selfish or unspiritual to ask for anything that God has already made available.

It is silly to ask God "if it be His will for something He has told you is already yours. We need to learn to simply take Him at His Word. We find an example of this in Luke 5:1-7.

Jesus borrowed the boat of some fishermen so that He could preach the Word to the crowd. After it He was finished He told them to let down their net again for another catch:

"And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless AT THY WORD I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake." (Luke 5:5-6)

Now Peter did not go to Jesus and say "Oh Lord, if it be thy will please give us a drought if I let down this net." He already had the Word of the Lord. Peter did not say "if it be thy will" to imply doubt. Instead He said, "*at thy word*" to imply faith. He took the Lord at His Word.

When it comes to healing, forgiveness, victory, or any other good thing that God has specifically and clearly promised then there is no need to question God's will concerning it.

If you want to be able to pray with faith and confidence then find out what God's will is BEFORE you pray. This can be done by simply searching the Bible and finding what God has promised you. When you find His promises then take Him at His Word and act on it.

The Basis of the "If It Be Thy Will" Error

The church has based the "if it be thy will" error on Matthew 26:36-46 and Mark 14:35-39. This is the incident where Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane. Let us look at this prayer of Jesus and see exactly what has been recorded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

*And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: **nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt**.... He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass*

*away from me, except I drink it, **thy will be done.*** (Matt. 26:39, 42)

The first thing that we must point out in these passages is the fact that the words, "If it be thy will," do not appear in these verses or in Mark's version. This is not to say that this phrase should never be used in prayer (see the next chapter) but we cannot justify using this phrase by saying that Jesus used it when in fact He did not. One cannot teach that we are patterning our prayer after Jesus when He did not pray, "if it be thy will."

The second thing we notice from this passage is that Jesus seemed to have already known the will of God. Judging by the way He prayed, He knew His Father's will but was still seeking God in case there was another way to bring our redemption. However, we must be thankful that our Lord submitted to His Father's will.

One thing that can comfort us from this is the fact that even when God has revealed His will to us, He is not angry with us seeking an alternative direction. However, if God has told us that His mind is made up, we must follow the Lord's example and submit completely to His will.

The last thing we can learn from this passage is that not once does Jesus teach us to doubt any clear promise from God. That is nowhere taught in the passages quoted above. The passage above nor the passage in Mark cannot be used to justify doubt and unbelief concerning any clear promise that God has made.

Other Prayers of Jesus Are Recorded In The Bible

Religion has taken ONE incident in the life of Jesus and has tried to make it the pattern for ALL prayer. People seem to think that this is the only time in the Bible that records Jesus' prayers. There is more than ONE incident recorded (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 9:29; 22:32-44; John 6:11; 11:41-44; 17:1-26).

Let us examine two other times that He prayed so that we can have a BALANCED prayer pattern from the life of Jesus:

"And Jesus took the loaves; and when HE HAD GIVEN THANKS, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." (John 6:11)

This the famous incident where Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two SMALL fish. Notice that the only praying that Jesus did was to say "thanks."

Jesus did not pray "Father, if it be thy will, PLEASE feed these poor hungry people somehow with these five loaves and two teeny tiny fishes." No, He gave THANKS and then distributed them. Jesus obviously already knew that it was God's will to feed those people so acted in faith by giving thanks.

If you are not receiving answers to your prayers, it may not be that it is not God's will for you to have it. It may be that you are not acting in faith. Faith believes that it receives before it sees any physical proof (Mark 11:24; Heb. 11:1). Just as in the case of Jesus, if you believe that you receive than you will tell God "thanks" before you ever see it. This kind of confidence can only come from already knowing God's will on the subject (1 John 5:14-15; Rom. 10:17).

Another incident of Jesus praying occurred when His friend Lazarus died. Everyone was weeping and crying because they felt Jesus came too late to help Lazarus. After all, the man was dead and buried. Jesus intended to show them how much power that was in faith and prayer:

"... And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always." (John 11:41b-42a)

Jesus told the Father "I know that thou hearest me ALWAYS." 1 John 5:14-15 tells us that the confidence that God hears us is when we pray according to His will. Obviously, Jesus always prayed according to the will of God because He had the confidence that God always heard Him.

The result of His prayer was Lazarus rising from the dead (John 11:43-44). You will always get results when you have confidence that your prayers are heard and answered.

Our Lord's Prayer Pattern and Blessings

When Jesus taught us to pray, He gave a pattern for prayer. This pattern teaches us to pray specifically and with confidence:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." (Matt. 6:9-12)

We are taught to pray for specific things here and not to continually question God's will concerning everything. We already know that it is God's will to supply our needs, forgive us, give us victory over temptation and deliverance from Satan's evil devices.

Jesus did not tell us to ask God if it was His will to do these things for us. He taught us to ask God for specific things with the confidence that we would receive them.

If people want to follow the example of Jesus then let us do all that He has shown and taught us to do. Let's learn to take Jesus at His Word.

Chapter Six

Error Five: We Must *Never* Pray "If It Be Thy Will."

We can only pray without an "if" when we are quite sure that our will must be God's will, because God's will is fully our will.[1] - Charles H. Spurgeon

An error just as dangerous as the one mentioned in our previous lesson is that of believing that we should never pray to ascertain the will of God. Some (not all) Charismatic and Word of Faith teachers teach that we should never pray "if it be thy will concerning anything.

It is so hard for Christians to stay balanced. We have a tendency to go to one extreme or the other. Just as we should not end every prayer with "if it be thy will," neither should we forget that sometimes we must pray in this manner when there is no clear and direct guidance from God on the subject that we are praying about.

As we read the Bible we understand that God will only answer prayer that is prayed in line with His will:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his WILL, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."
(1 John 5:14-15)

The word "will" in this passage of scripture comes from the Greek word *thelema* which means "*purpose, decree, desire, pleasure, will.*"{2} In our praying, we are to put God's desires ahead of our own. As we pray according to His desires and purposes, we are guaranteed to not only be heard but to also receive that which we have asked for.

Knowing God's will primarily comes from spending time in His Word and in prayer. The Word of God is the revealed will of God.

This is the primary way to know God's will concerning any subject. There are principles that cover everything we will ever need from God's Word, but the Bible does not tell you every detail of God's will for *your* personal life. There are some things you will only get from God as you pray and seek Him.

When I lived In Okinawa I ministered primarily to the men and women of the United States armed forces who were assigned there. They were there for anywhere from two to four years. Afterwards, they had to be reassigned. Now many of these Christian men and women had certain places that they desire to be assigned to when they left there. For example, Some wanted to leave there and go to Hawaii. Yet, there is no promise in the Bible that specifically states that "God will send brother or sister so and so to Hawaii."

Another example is the call to ministry. There is no passage of scripture that states "God has called Troy Edwards into a writing and teaching ministry." I personally love teaching the message of faith and answered prayer. I like showing people how to get their prayers answered by praying according to God's Word. Yet how can we pray for something effectively that is not specified in God's Word? That's when we pray to ascertain the will of God, or some may pray, "Lord I will go to _____ if it is your will for me."

Believers must realize that there is more than one way to pray. In school there is more than one type of MATH. We have geometry, algebra, trigonometry, calculus, etc. All of these different types of math have different rules for solving specific problems. Though both are math, you just don't use the same rules in Algebra to solve a calculus problem. In prayer we also have different ways of praying and we must follow the rules of the type of prayer that we are praying..

What do we do with a desire to be assigned to Hawaii or a calling into the ministry? These are things that must first be submitted to God in order for us to receive an answer. I cannot just tell God, "Oh Lord, I want to teach and preach all over the world. I want to be a famous evangelist. Please help me," and expect God to just call you into the ministry.

This is when you must consecrate yourself to God. This is when you must put your ambitions and desires aside and find out what are God's ambitions and desires for you. Instead of asking God, "Lord send me to Hawaii," we must ask, "Lord, where is it that you want me

to go?" Jesus prayer in the garden of Gethsemane gives us a pattern for this:

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:41-42).

This is the prayer of consecration. Jesus was putting His desires aside and putting His Father's desires first. He wanted to do His Father's will even if the Father's will did not line up with His will. I am so glad He did, aren't you? Suppose Jesus had just rebelled against His Father's will? You and I would have no hope of eternal life. We would be destined for hell, not to mention a life of misery and sorrow while here on earth.

When you put your desires ahead of God's, you are not only hurting yourself but you are hurting those whom God could have used you to help had you been obedient. We must follow Jesus example and put God's will ahead of ours.

What Praying "If It Be Thy Will" Is Not

A wise man once said if you want to know what something *is*, first find out what it *is not*. Let us see what the prayer that Jesus prayed *is NOT*.

We must remember however that Jesus was praying a prayer of consecration. He was not petitioning God in the sense that we would pray the prayer of faith. Too many problems have been caused by people taking this example of Jesus and praying "if it be thy will" when certain things are already revealed in the will of God. When corrected, they will say, "but this is the way Jesus prayed!" Then they wonder why their prayers are not being answered.

DO NOT pray if it be thy will concerning HEALING. God's will for your healing has already been revealed in His Word:

"And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, IF THOU WILT, THOU CANST MAKE ME CLEAN, and Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I WILL, BE THOU CLEAN. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was clean." (Mark 1:40-42).

This man did not have a Bible as we do. He did not have the multitude of teachers to show him what belonged to him under the Abrahamic covenant. Until Jesus came along, all that was being taught was plain legalism. He had nothing to base his faith on when he came to Jesus with his petition. Yet the will of God concerning this man's healing is revealed in Jesus' two words: I will.

This passage of Scripture was recorded for us so that we can see what God's will is for everyone who is under covenant with Him. God has no favorites. Some people try to teach the SOVEREIGNTY of God concerning divine healing. They teach that God chooses to heal some and not others. Do not receive this fatalistic teaching. E.M. Bounds, a man who has written numerous books on prayer has made this statement that I am in full agreement with:

Answers to prayer are the only surety that we have prayed aright. What marvelous power there is in prayer! What untold miracles it works in this world! What untold benefits to men does it secure to those who pray! Why is it that the average prayer by the million goes a begging for an answer?

The millions of unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God's will. We are not the sport of his sovereign power. He is not playing at "make-believe" in his marvelous promises to answer prayer. The whole explanation is found in our wrong praying. "We ask and receive not because we ask amiss." If all unanswered prayers were dumped into the ocean, they would come very near filling it. Child of God, can you pray? Are your prayers answered? If not, why not? Answered prayer is the proof of your real praying.[3]

There are many passages of scriptures that prove that it is God's will for all His children to walk in divine health. We do not pray the prayer of consecration when it comes to healing. We just ask God to do it according to His Word and then we believe that we receive.

DO NOT tell God "If it be thy will, please provide me with enough money to feed my wife and children." or "Please give me a job if it be thy will." His will is already revealed in His Word in that area. You must search the Bible and find the promises that reveal this and then claim them.

DO NOT pray, "God, if it be thy will, do something about the devil. He's tearing my life apart." God has done all that He is ever going to do about the devil through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has given you authority over the devil. YOU can and you MUST do something about the devil yourself. Otherwise he will continue to tear your life apart.

God's Word reveals His will concerning marriage, sanctification, holiness, witnessing, deliverance, salvation of loved ones, etc. To pray "if it be thy will" concerning any area that is revealed in His Word is praying in unbelief. This kind of prayer has no guarantee of an answer.

Seeking God's Plans Above Our Own

On the other hand, too many Christians hear me and others preached what has been labeled the "Word of Faith" message and then go to the far extreme. They apply faith principles where consecration principles should be applied. Now we understand that all praying, regardless of what kind must be done in faith. However, we have to be careful not to claim something from God when His will has not been revealed on that subject.

Once I was teaching a series on how to get prayers answered. Afterwards I was approached by a lovely Christian woman. She got confused during the study because I was showing them Scriptures which told us that we can ask anything from God and receive it. In other words, I was teaching the prayer of petition. She and her husband were about to be reassigned and she had been asking the Lord to send

them where it was His will for them to go. After listening to me teach she thought that maybe she was wrong.

I told her she was not but that she was correct in the way that she prayed. I explained to her that I was only teaching on a specific type of prayer. She was praying a different kind but she was praying correctly.

This brought her relief. She then began to relate to me an incident that happened with another Christian couple that she was close friends with.

This couple who was in the military were waiting for reassignment. They wanted to go to a specific area but did not ask God's will concerning it. They just began to "confess it" and thank God for it. This young lady tried to correct them according to what she knew but they would not listen to her. To make her long story short they received a different assignment than the one they desired.

So many so called Christians make their own plans and then expect God to bless them. Unfortunately, many ministers do this too. We find it too hard to seek the Lord for our every move. Man is too self sufficient when we should be God dependent. God will not bless selfish plans. We are to submit our plans to Him and leave ourselves open for a yes or no.

James had something to say to those who liked making their own plans apart from God's will:

"Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, IF THE LORD WILL, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such boasting is evil." (James 4:13-16).

Many Christians have taken this passage of scripture to say, "You know, we're not guaranteed tomorrow." That's not true. If we are living in line with God's will then we are promised long life and good

days upon the earth (Ex. 23:25-26; Ps. 91:16; 92:12-15; Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Pet. 3:8-12). This is included with the blessings of prosperity and health.

This passage of scripture is to be applied to those who are not in line with God's will. They go around bragging about doing this and that and do not include God in their plans. They don't bother to seek God. They just brag on themselves. Many today call it a "confession of faith." Much of what we call "faith confessions" is nothing but a bunch of arrogant boasting. God says this is a sin. If your confession is not based on God's Word or the calling He has revealed to you then you are bragging and you are in sin. You need to repent.

James told these people that their plans were in vain. They were not living in God's perfect will for there lives and therefore were not even guaranteed to see tomorrow. We cannot claim the promises of long life, prosperity, and health if we will not submit ourselves to the will of God. James told these people in the same chapter some verses before that their arrogance was the reason that they were not getting their prayers answered:

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:3).

God will answer prayer when we consecrate ourselves to Him and His will. He is not in the business of blessing us just to consume upon our "lusts". As we have discussed in previous chapters He will bless us with good things, but He does not want these good things to enslave us.

Knowing *When* To Pray "If It Be Thy Will"

When it all comes down to it we must remember when to pray "If it be thy will" and when not to. Both will bring blessings when prayed correctly. If God's will for you is not distinctively revealed in His Word (for example: What church to go to? Should I become a missionary to Africa? Am I called to the ministry?), then God

promises to reveal it to you once you have consecrated yourself as Jesus did: "not my will, but thine be done."

Some years ago when I was in the military I was not sure whether to continue with my military career or leave and stay in Okinawa as a missionary. It would have been the easiest thing for me to stay in. The job situation in the United States was beginning to look hopeless and Okinawa did not look any better. In fact the job situation here looked worse.

I talked to others who had once been in the military and said that the Lord told them to get out and stay in Okinawa. Their situations were not the least bit encouraging. Many of them were struggling financially and could not land any good jobs.

I had a family to feed and the Air Force was doing that for me. The Air Force provided me housing, food allowance, and enough money to spare. All I had to do was report to work and do my job. I thought about how hard it was to give up all of that. I was well on my way to signing my reenlistment paperwork.

But then I really became impressed in my spirit to seek the Lord and ask Him to reveal His will in this decision. I promised Him that I would submit to His will for me. Some time later during a praise and worship service at our church God began to speak to both my wife and I. He told me that He wanted me out.

"But Lord," I told Him, "I have failed you so many times." He lovingly told me, "Son, I will keep you if you want to be kept." Afterwards I turned to my wife and told her "Honey, I'm leaving the military." She told me, "I knew that already."

Once we received this Word then I started praying about having a job to feed my family until I was able to build my ministry to a point that I could go full time. I needed a place that was adequate for my wife and children. We were living in military quarters at that time.

God did that and much, much more. Just before it was time for me to leave the military they began to have a "drawdown" of the services. They were offering substantial amounts of money to those who would voluntarily leave the military. I of course signed up for the program. This money helped us to get on our feet and buy the things that we needed. If you have never been in the military here in Okinawa

then you may never realize how dependent one can be on the government to provide the necessities and luxuries of life.

God blessed us with the exact house we prayed for and lower the rent we asked for. He blessed me with a very good job in a position that is normally not given when first starting out. God blessed my family and I overly and abundantly. He has not stopped yet providing our needs. He will bless all of His children in the same manner if they will just consecrate themselves to Him.

I could tell many more stories like this if space permitted. I can say that God will take care of those who submit their will to His. A word of caution: Being in God's will does not mean that everything will

automatically fall in place for you. Satan will still attack. You will still experience trials and tribulations. Yet if you are in God's perfect will these things can be overcome.

We experienced our share while we knew that we were in God's perfect will, yet we prayed them through and God worked them out. As you learn to consecrate your will to God you will be the victor over every obstacle that stands in the way of the task He has given you.

Always desire to pray in line with the will of God, whether it is the will revealed from the Bible or His will as He speaks to your heart by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Seven

Error Six: God Will Withhold Some Good Things Because They Can Cause Us to Backslide

"We can make the boldest requests, knowing that He who gives the greatest blessing can give the grace to keep it from being a selfish idol or a curse to our spirit. People sometimes say, 'If God were to heal me or give me some temporal blessing for which I am praying, I fear it might not be best for me.' Can we not trust Him for the grace as well as the gift?" - A.B. Simpson {1}

God is not obligated to answer a prayer that is foolish and not in line with His will for our lives. God cares too much for His children to give things that will do us more harm and no good.

Yet, as we have seen in our last two lessons, God's will can be known by His promises and by the voice of the Holy Spirit. God has bound Himself to do what He has spoken in His Word (Num. 23:19). No man can MAKE God do anything. However, He has covenanted Himself with man. Within this covenant He has given promises and He has bound HIMSELF to His word. You and I cannot force the hand of God to do anything. He has already decided that He would do it when we ask Him.

Because most people know that God will not answer FOOLISH prayers and give things that are harmful, many Christians have allowed themselves to be deprived of the many good things that God has promised us. They have allowed the devil to deceive them into thinking any good blessing could cause them to stray.

Yet God assures us that if we walk uprightly then He will not withhold any good thing from us:

*"For the Lord is a sun and a shield: the Lord will give **grace** and glory: NO GOOD THING WILL HE WITHHOLD from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11)*

There are some people who may have had every material blessing that they ever desired. Through some terrible circumstances they lost everything. They had no other choice but to turn to God. Now they know the joy of fellowshiping with God. They have found out that His presence is worth more than a trillion dollars.

Because of this they believe that their poverty is a good thing. They are afraid that if they receive any material blessing it will cause them to lose fellowship with God. They are afraid that it will cause them to go back to their old ways.

The same has happened with many people in sickness. Since they were bedridden they had plenty of time to pray and read their Bible. They are now afraid that if they have health restored to them that they will go back to living the "half baked" Christian life that they lived before.

Yet the Bible tells us that the Lord will give GRACE. The word "*grace*" means "*divine favor.*" The Bible implies that it is something that is not deserved but given upon the basis of the righteousness of Christ (Eph. 1:6-7; 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5). It is this grace that strengthens and helps us in our walk with Christ (Heb. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:1; 1 Pet. 5:5-10; 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

God never once told us that we had to live free from sin in our own power. He gives us His grace to strengthen us. It is not by denying ourselves of good things that will enable us to obtain victory over sin. It is by faith in His grace to strengthen us that we will live uprightly.

When we walk upright before Him He will withhold NO good thing from us. Yet, He provides us with the grace to walk upright. You can't beat a deal like that.

Legalistic Error

This error comes very close to LEGALISM. Legalism is trying to live the Christian life by observing a bunch of rules, regulations, and customs. These are without any dependence upon God's power which grace gives us. The Jews had the righteous laws of God but these laws

were given to PROVE that no man could live up to God's standards in his or her own strength (Gal. 3:24-25).

Therefore if we have to live up to a certain standard in order to receive God's blessings then we could not even get to heaven. Will God deny us free passage to heaven because He's afraid that we may backslide when we get there? Certainly not! Therefore, if we can be born again and guaranteed heaven by His grace, can we not believe Him for the grace to appropriate all of His blessings?

"For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore, IT IS OF FAITH, THAT IT MIGHT BE BY GRACE; to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed...." (Rom. 4:13-16a)

I like the way the Living Bible paraphrases the first part of verse 16: *"So God's blessings are given to us by faith, as a free gift; we are certain to get them...."*

God's grace guarantees us that we can have all that God has made available to us regardless of its SUPPOSED potential to cause us to backslide. Grace provides the blessings of God to us on a FREE basis:

*"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also **FREELY** give us all things." (Rom. 8:32)*

God's blessings are not EARNED. They are gifts given by His grace and appropriated by faith. Too many people feel unworthy and undeserving of God's blessings. Do not worry, YOU ARE! If you are depending on YOUR righteousness to make you worthy and deserving, you will always come short.

However, Christ is worthy and deserving of every blessing that God could ever give. You and I are IN CHRIST. We are members of His body. He has purchased us by His blood. His blood cleanses us from the sin that makes us unworthy. Therefore if Christ deserves it then we can have it. Anything less is to count the redeeming work of Christ as unworthy for you.

Christ's death on our behalf is sufficient to make us worthy to receive ALL that God has for His children. You are no longer a "sinner saved by grace." You WERE a sinner (Rom. 5:8-9; Notice the past tense of this statement). You were saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Now you are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, anything Christ deserves can be yours by faith in His redeeming work:

".....the upright shall have good things in possession."
(Prov. 28:10)

"Blessings are on the head of the righteous....." (Prov. 10:6; NKJV)

God does not sit on the throne, biting His nails, wondering that if He blesses you, will it cause you to backslide. If you are living righteously by His power, you have made yourself available to be blessed.

No Denial of Blessings on the Basis of *Potential* Backsliding

There is nothing in the Bible that can prove that God will withhold His blessings because of the potential of His people to backslide. On the contrary, the Bible shows many times over that He blessed some people abundantly and they still backslid. But that did not keep Him from blessing them and others.

The story of the prodigal son shows a type of God the Father and the backslidden Christian. Here we find the giving heart of God:

"And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far away country, and there WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE ON RIOTOUS LIVING." (Luke 15:11-13)

If the father in this story is a type of our Heavenly Father, then he must have known that giving his son all that blessing would lead to him wasting it. Even if that was not true he should at least have learned a lesson from the first time, right? Most of us would have said, "Well, he blew the last time. I'll be careful about blessing him this time. I don't need him continually wasting my blessings."

However, as we read further into the story, the son came back in repentance. The father could have said, "Son, I'll forgive you and take you back, but I've learned not to give you any of the good things that I have. You will have to do without from here on. It's for your own good. It'll keep you from going astray again."

That is what he could have said. Instead he said something different:

*"But the father said to the servants, Bring forth the **BEST** robe and put it on him; and put a RING on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry." (Luke 15:22-23)*

Even after his son backslid and returned, he showered him with the BEST that he had. Our Heavenly Father is much more wealthy and loving than any human father. Shouldn't we expect the same from Him.

God was going to bless Israel abundantly in the land of Canaan. As we read Deuteronomy 8:7-20, God shows them that there was a potential for them to backslide after they have received His blessings. Let's read verses ten and eleven:

"When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgements, and his statutes, which I command thee this day."

Later on, God warns them of the same thing through Joshua:

"If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, AFTER that he hath done you good." (Josh. 24:20)

You see, God knew that they could possibly backslide even after He had blessed them abundantly in the Promised Land. When you read the book of Judges you find that they did just that - backslid.

Since God knew this, shouldn't He have kept them in the wilderness with nothing but the basic necessities so that they could have stayed close to Him? That would seem like the most logical way to us but it is not God's way. God is in the business of blessing His people.

All Are Subject to the Temptation to Backslide

If God were to withhold blessings on such a basis then none of us could ever be blessed because we are all subject to temptation. It is a sin itself to blame God's blessings as the cause of one's backsliding:

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James 1:13-14)

A man is tempted by HIS OWN LUST. It is not God that tempts him. Man is not tempted because of good things. If a person is so easily drawn by lust, then that person will sin whether God blesses him or not.

People are tempted with EVIL, not good. God goes on to say that the blessings He gives are GOOD and to believe that it is His gifts that will cause one to backslide is to err:

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every GOOD gift and every PERFECT gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:16-17)

Therefore it is wrong to blame God's blessings as the cause for people backsliding. In the Garden of Eden Adam blamed God for his sin by saying, *"The woman whom THOU GAVEST to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."* (Gen. 3:12). In other words, Adam was saying, "I backslid because of your blessing to me."

Doesn't that sound ludicrous? Yet we make such statements as this: "God won't bless me with that because it may cause me to backslide." It was not God's gift that caused Adam to backslide. God's gift to Him was good and perfect. When Eve presented the fruit to Adam he was drawn away of his own lust and enticed. God was not to blame for it.

God is not to blame for anyone else backsliding after He has healed them, delivered them, prospered them or blessed them in any other kind of way. I have seen a person get healed of cancer and turn away from God right after that. Yet, God did not stop healing people after that.

A friend of mine who is a minister in the Philippines told me the story of how a family in his church asked God for furniture, refrigerator and other material possessions. These things are very hard to get in the Philippines and are reserved for the wealthy. Yet God miraculously provided all of this to them. Not too long afterwards, they stopped coming to church. Yet this did not stop God from blessing others materially and financially.

Conclusion

We do not condone backsliding. On the contrary we do not recommend it because it can come with some serious consequences. You take yourself from under God's protection and you leave yourself open for Satan to destroy your life when you turn away from God.

On the other hand, we do not want people to withhold from themselves all that God has made available because they think it has the potential to cause them to turn away from Him. These people become afraid to claim all that God has made available to them. This fear comes from Satan. Do not let Him lie to you. If the grace of God can provide you with His blessings, then that same grace can enable you to keep it from becoming a snare and a hindrance.

Chapter Eight

Error Seven: Because Of His Grace, God Will Bless Us No Matter How We Live

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God Forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein." (Rom. 6:1-2)

Some who claim to be born again feel that they can live a life of sin and God will still bless them. Satan has fed them the false idea that because God is gracious and merciful, He will just wink His eye at sin in our lives.

In our last lesson, we learned that by the grace of God, His blessings are bestowed upon us FREELY. Our receiving from God is based on Christ's finished work on the cross. You and I could do nothing to EARN God's blessings. They are already available.

Yet, some have heard teaching along these lines and have insincerely taken the grace of God as a license to sin. However, the Scriptures show us a different picture concerning God's grace:

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Where with he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (James 4:4-6)

First of all, this passage is not written to those outside of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit inspired James to write this letter to Christians. In verse 2 James addresses his readers as his "brethren." Those outside of the church are not part of the universal family and therefore could not be addressed as brethren. This establishes the fact

that this letter was written to people who were supposed to be a part of the body of Christ.

These people, like many today wanted the best of both worlds. They wanted the blessings of God on one hand and the pleasures and sins of the world on the other. Yet God does not appreciate those who claim to be His own having intimate fellowship with His enemies. God is a jealous God. He must either be all in our life or nothing. We must be either hot or cold because if we are lukewarm, we will be regurgitated (Rev. 3:15-16).

God further told them that they were in pride. All sin has its origin in pride. Satan fell due to pride (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28). When we sin we are full of pride because we are living independent of God. Sin is in essence saying, "God, I don't need you." When you say that then you are no longer a partaker of His grace.

James told them that the only candidates for grace were those who were HUMBLE: those who know their need of God and want to do their best for Him. They may not yet be perfect but they are aiming for it, not in their own strength but by the supernatural power of His grace.

James was also answering the question: "If God is such a good and wonderful God, why doesn't He answer my prayer?" Before touching on God's grace, James addresses their problem of unanswered prayer in the verses ahead:

"Ye lust and have not: ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."
(James 4:2-3)

Here was the reason they could get nothing: they prevented the grace of God from working in their lives by their ungodly living. They yielded to the spirit of this present evil world. They lived proud and arrogantly and then wondered why they were not being blessed.

God will supply our needs. When we delight ourselves in Him He will even give us the desires of our hearts. However, God will not

give us our LUSTS. God expect us to apply the blood of Jesus and overcome them.

Although it is by the grace of God, and not our personal righteousness that we receive His blessings, God also expects us to live in His grace so that we may overcome sin in our lives. When we yield to the flesh and the spirit of the world we live apart from His grace. When we live apart from the grace of God we cannot receive those things that His grace provides for us.

It is always God's will and His desire to bless His people but it is our choice whether we receive these things from Him:

"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you." (Jer. 5:25)

God has promised to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly (Ps. 84:11). Therefore, if you are not receiving good things in your life then please do not blame God. It's your SINS that have withheld those good things from coming to pass in your life. God is trying to send those things to you but your iniquities are turning them away.

Our sins frustrate the flow of God's grace on our behalf. Someone used to say "God can't bless a mess." When we decide to live a life of sin instead of living victoriously by the grace of God, God refuses to even hear our prayer:

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isa. 59:1-2)

God is saying here that the problem does not with Him or His ability to do anything. The problem is with YOU. It's our sins that separate us from Him. When sin is finished, it brings forth death (James 1:15). Death is separation from God.

It is sin that causes God to CHOOSE to not hear prayer. It isn't that He cannot hear, He chooses not to. It is when we know that God has heard our prayers that we can have confidence that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him (1 John 5:14-15). If we are living a life of sin then we either can have no confidence or we are living under a false confidence.

Unfortunately, because many people believe the error that say that we can live any way we please because of God's grace, they are living under a false confidence. It is dangerous to teach a doctrine of legalism, making people adhere to certain rules and regulations in order to maintain salvation and earn God's blessings.

Yet, it is equally dangerous to go to the other extreme of using God's grace as a license to sin. God's people will fail and make mistakes. God has made provision for that (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:7-9). But God does not expect nor does He condone His people making a lifestyle of sin (1 John 3:4-10).

If we are to receive the blessings of God in our lives we must do those things that are pleasing to Him:

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him ..." (1 John 3:22a)

Too many people stop reading right there. They are excited about this. They should. After all, it's a wonderful promise. To know that **WHATSOEVER** I ask, I receive of Him. Notice the word "WHATSOEVER." That covers a multitude of things - needs and desires. I can have whatsoever I ask.

Yet if we read further, we see that there is a condition attached to this privilege of limitless prayer answers:

".....because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3:22b)

If we are going to receive the Father's blessings we must first learn to be a Father pleaser. One cannot please the Father and feed the lusts of his or her flesh at the same time (Rom. 8:8). Whatever you

yield your members to obey is that which has become your master (Rom. 6:16).

The choice of whether we receive the blessings of God is not up to Him. It is up to us. It is no longer God's responsibility. It is ours. Someone once said that "responsibility is our response to God's ability." This is true. When we decide that we want to do the things that pleases God then the Holy Spirit will empower us to do it.

Obedience is what pleases God (Col. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:1). God requires obedience in order that we may receive His blessings:

"And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, BECAUSE you obey the voice of the Lord your God." (Deut. 28:2; NKJV)

In both 1 John 3:22 and Deuteronomy 28:2 we see the word "because" following the promises of answered prayer and blessing. When you see the word "because" in a statement that God has made, it means that there is more to follow. It is telling you that there is a requirement to be fulfilled before you can receive the promise in your life.

Keeping God's Moral Law

Although we no longer have to observe traditions and ceremonies in order to be saved and be blessed, not one time in the New Testament did God tell us that obedience was no longer a requirement.

God still expects us to keep His moral laws (1 Cor. 5:8-20; Gal. 5:16-22; Col. 3:5-10). I remember years ago, before I gave my life to Christ I was eating in an Air Force dining facility. Some tables away I heard a man explaining to another man about salvation. He told him, "You can get saved and then do whatever you want after that."

As I heard this I thought, "Then what's the use of getting saved. I'm tired of the things I'm doing." Even as a sinner I could not accept such an interpretation of the gospel. My friends, God will forgive your sins but He will not condone them. God has given us every resource to

enable us to live victoriously. He still expects us to walk in His commandments concerning our moral conduct.

God is not a "magical genie" whom we can get to grant our wishes whenever we desire with no moral obligations to Him. He is God, Father, and Lord. He requires our obedience if we are to receive His blessings.

God Prohibits Sin For *Our* Sake

Some people hear these things and get under the mistaken delusion that God does not want us to have any "fun." They think of God as some prude old man sitting on the throne saying things like "don't do this, and don't do that." They imagine Him with lightning bolts, ready to strike the poor soul that slips.

God is not mean and prude. He did not establish moral laws for Himself. He did this for OUR sakes:

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, FOR OUR GOOD ALWAYS, that he might preserve us alive, as it is this day." (Deut. 6:24)

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to love him and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for THY GOOD?" (Deut.10:12-13).

As you can see, God was not sitting on the throne trying to think of ways that He could further torment our miserable lives. God established His moral law in order to protect us from the dangers that are the consequences of sin.

When He warned Adam of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was not so that He could deny Adam of any of life's pleasures. On the contrary He told Adam, "*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.*" (Gen. 2:16). But He went on to warn Adam of the fatal consequences of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God had provided Adam with every pleasure imaginable. All that Adam could have ever needed or desired was available to him in that garden. Yet, he and Eve went on to doing something forbidden, even though it was unnecessary. Now all we have to do is pick up a newspaper to see the consequences that come as a result of their disobedience.

This was also the case with King David. After his famous adulterous affair with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, God was very unhappy. You see, David had all the wives he could have ever needed. He had no need for another man's wife.

God reminded David of all of the blessings that He had provided him and went on to say, "*.....and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?*" (2 Sam. 12:8-9).

One of the reasons God blesses us is to keep us from sinning. If what God had given to David had not been enough He would have given more. God will do the same under the new covenant (Eph. 3:20). He wants to be your provider. He does not want you to rely on the world or the devil to meet your desires. When we sin, we are telling God that His blessings are not good enough.

It's a slap in God's face for Him to supply all of our needs and to give us the desires of our hearts and we still go after things that He has forbidden. God demonstrates His love by not only giving us what we want, but also by forbidding that which would harm us.

Placing Ourselves in Enemy Territory

When we disobey God's moral standard of living, we put ourselves in the enemies' territory. We give him place in our lives:

"Be angry, and SIN NOT: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil." (Eph. 4:26-27)

The Bible makes it clear that he who sins is of the devil (1 John 3:8). When we live a life of habitual sin we give place to Satan to destroy our lives and keep us from the blessings that God has for us.

When temptation to sin comes your way, and believe me, it will, you must resist it by using God's Word. Remind the devil that you are dead to sin and it no longer has any power over you. God will enable you to stand against all temptation by His grace as you stand on His Word. As you take your position against sin, you place yourself in a position to receive God's blessings.

Chapter Nine

Error Eight: God Will Sometimes Replace What We Ask Him For With What He Knows We Truly Need

We do but follow the plain letter and spirit of the Bible when we affirm that God answers prayer, and answers by giving us the very things we desire, and that the withholding of that which we desire and the giving of something else is not the rule, but rare and exceptional. {1} – Edward M. Bounds

I am sure that you have heard this before. A person may have prayed for a red Cadillac and but instead received a green Volkswagen and they have said, "God knew what I REALLY needed anyway. He knows what's best for me."

First of all, I would like to say thank God that there are some prayers that He will not answer. There are times that we just wished we were dead and we have said, "Lord, please kill me now!" I have prayed that prayer before and I am so glad that He did not answer it. He knew it was best that I live because He had a purpose for my life.

However, we are not talking about foolish prayers prayed with lack of wisdom. We are talking about prayers that are prayed in line with His promises and His revealed will for our lives. There are some who try to comfort the sick with such statements as, "Yes, you asked God for healing, but in His infinite wisdom He gave you that sickness. He wants to use it to draw you closer to Him."

I do not doubt that God can use any bad situation to draw people closer to Him. There are people who after committing some terrible crime went to prison and then gave their lives to Jesus. In prison they have plenty of time to pray and read their Bibles. Does that mean that it was God's will for them to commit these crimes? Certainly not.

Then we should not assume that God will violate His promises to us because of what we think that He thinks is best. His best for us is

what He has promised. If He did not think it was best for all He would not have made the promise available for all to read.

In the case of sickness, God would be violating His Word concerning healing if He gave sickness to His child who sincerely asked for health because "that's what they really needed" (Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:24). God shows us that thing we pray for is the thing that we get:

*"Ask, and **IT** shall be given you....." (Matt. 7:7a)*

What is the "it" that shall be given to you? The thing you asked for. If God gives anything other than that then He has already violated His Word. As we read on, Jesus appeals to man's common sense by asking a few simple questions concerning the human parental relationship:

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" (Matt. 7:9-10)

Jesus already knew that if there were any decent father's out in the congregation they would already be saying to themselves, "Of course not! What kind of men does He think we are. We would never do such things to our children. As a matter of fact, we put in jail anyone who does."

Jesus was trying to get their attention as He is trying to get ours. He already knew the answer to these questions. Now He could drive home His point:

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, HOW MUCH MORE shall your Father which is in heaven give GOOD THINGS to them that ask him." (Matt. 7:11)

Satan has very few original lies. Many of the lies that are being told from the pulpit today were also being taught from the synagogues of Jesus' day. Too many people have a negative view of God. They seem to have this picture of God just waiting for someone to ask Him for something so that He will give them the opposite.

Jesus shows the heart of the Father by comparing it to man's. Man is a creature that is born in sin and has deficiencies in his character. Yet most men take pride in the fact that they love their children and desire to provide the best for them. Many of us take joy in giving our children the things they ask.

Well, if imperfect creatures delight in their children this much, why would we allow ourselves to view our Heavenly Father any other way. In fact, we should believe that God would desire to do even more than any earthly father.

As I have said, man has deficiencies in his character. Many times his love is based on emotion. God's love is based on His holiness. He loves His children in spite of themselves. He will not replace the good things we ask Him for with bad. He only gives good things to those that ask Him. Take notice of the requirement. You have to ask Him. If you do not have, it is because you do not ask (James 4:2).

God has promised that we can have *"whatever things"* we ask for:

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive THEM...." (Mark 11:24a)

Believe that ye receive what? Believe that ye receive THEM. What are the *"them"*? *"What things soever ye desire when ye pray"* is the "them" that you must believe that ye receive.

The problem with too many of us is that we pray for certain things and then we believe that God is going to give us something else. That is one of the reasons why we do not receive what we have actually prayed for. Jesus promises us what we will get if we believe that we receive that which we have asked for:

".....and ye shall have THEM." (Mark 11:24b)

What is the "them" ye shall have? The "them" you shall have are first, the things you desired when you prayed, and second, the things that you believe that you receive. You must not only make your requests known to God, but you must believe that you will actually receive the very thing that you have asked Him for.

The Apostle John said it this way:

"And whatsoever things we ask, WE RECEIVE OF HIM, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John 3:22)

We receive from God the very things that we ask Him for. He says no where in any of these Scriptures that He will replace anything if He feels that it is not good for us at the time. We have come up with every excuse for our lack of faith and our lack of diligence to stand until we actually receive the things we desire from heaven. Even worse we put all the blame on God and excuse ourselves from all responsibility.

God has made it clear in these passages and many others that we could quote if space permitted, that we can receive from Him the very things we ask Him for. He does not substitute anything. On the contrary, He promises NOT to substitute it.

Part of the problem with too many Christians is that we are not specific with God when we pray. We think that we can give God long religious prayers and He will automatically give us what we really want. Jesus warns us against such praying:

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like them? For

your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, BEFORE YE ASK HIM." (Matt. 6:7-8)

The Everyday Bible translates verse 8 this way: *"And when you pray, don't be like those people who don't know God. They continue saying things THAT MEAN NOTHING. They think God will hear them because of the many things they say."* Much of the praying that some people do is a waste of time. They give meaningless prayer.

God says that He knows what things we need, but He never says, "I already know what you need so don't bother praying. I'll just give it to you." Wrong! He says He knows what things we have need of BEFORE we ask Him. That means that we are still required to ask Him.

But He shows us here that He wants us to be specific with our requests. He does not want us going to Him with vain repetitions, or words that mean absolutely nothing. We must get down to serious business and be real with Him. God is not about playing kid's games.

God does not want us using His "all knowing" ability as an excuse to not be specific with Him in prayer. Jesus gives us an example of what it means to be specific with Him.

In Mark 10:46-52, Jesus and His disciples had gone to Jericho. A blind man named Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside begging. When this blind man heard that Jesus was there, he began crying out to him to have mercy on him. Jesus called Bartimaeus over and asked him a question:

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee..." (Mark 10:51a)

Take note that this man was BLIND. Jesus could see this fact. Jesus had the greatest healing ministry that the world has ever seen before or since. So what kind of a question was that to ask Bartimaeus?

Jesus was teaching us an object lesson. Here was a man with an obvious need. Jesus knew what that need was, yet He still asks, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He is showing us the truth of

Matthew 6:7-8, that though God knows what you need, He still requires you to be specific.

In verse 48, Bartimaeus was asking Jesus to have mercy on him. Jesus basically wanted Bartimaeus to specifically tell Him in what way He should demonstrate that mercy. Bartimaeus is a lot smarter than most of us. Instead of saying to himself, "Now this man sees that I'm blind. What else would He think that I would want except to see."

This is how most of us would act. Instead, Bartimaeus went for His blessing by following the laws of God for answered prayer:

*".....The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."
(Mark 10:51b-52)*

The man received EXACTLY what he asked for. He did not receive what Jesus felt the man needed. In verse 46 we see that the man was sitting by the side of the road begging. Jesus could have said, "Well Bart, that blindness you have is good for you. It'll keep you from looking and lusting after women. Instead I'll give you some money to supply your needs."

No! Jesus gave no substitutes for the man's request. He granted him exactly what the man asked for which was sight. But the key is that the man had to be specific in his requests.

God tells us to make our requests KNOWN unto Him:

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6)

This is the law of God. Although He knows what we need, He still requires our expressing these needs to Him. If God requires this then we have no right to try to expect Him to do differently.

Many people still complain that they ask God for things and do not get them or get something different from what they ask. God tells us to be specific. But when we are, we are not to WAVER in our requests:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and IT shall be given to him." (James 1:5)

What is the "it" that shall be given to him? It is the wisdom that he asks for. God is saying, "My wisdom is available but in order for you to have it you must ask for it specifically." Perhaps we should ask God for "wisdom" before we ever ask Him for any other thing.

The way Kenneth S. Wuest translates this verse is appropriate for our study:

"And if, as is the case, anyone of you [when undergoing trials] is deficient in wisdom, let him keep on presenting his request in the presence of the giving God who gives to all with simplicity and without reserve [a pure, simple giving of good without admixture of evil or bitterness], and who does not [with the giving of the gift] reproach [the recipient with any manifestation of displeasure or regret], and it shall be given him." (The New Testament: An Expanded Translation)

What God gives will be GOOD. There will be no admixture of evil or bitterness. God will give no substitute for what you specifically ask Him for. But this asking must be done in faith without any wavering:

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the see driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (James 1:6-7)

It is not that God does not want to give the man what he is asking for, it is that the man is UNABLE to receive. His wavering is keeping him from receiving what God wants to give him.

Years ago I was in the military and the Lord told me He wanted me to get out and stay in Okinawa. My wife and I were living in base quarters and knew that we would need a place out in the economy. We made specific requests to God for a three bedroom house, with two sinks, a yard, and in a specific location. The rent also had to be certain amount.

We then tried to put action to our faith by going out and looking. Most of what we found was discouraging. If we did find a three bedroom house it was not in the price range we asked for (housing is expensive in Okinawa). No one would come down for us.

If we did find something in our price range it was usually missing one or more of the other elements we desired. One of my friends told me, "Perhaps you should just go ahead and rent what is available." I almost compromised on several occasions but somehow things would not work out and the deal would fall through.

I began to be upset with God and I told Him, "You told me to leave the military, but I need a place to live. Where's the house I asked you for." He then told me, "Son, you have been wavering." I began to see that He was right.

I then agreed with the elders of the church for the very house and job that I wanted. Later that week I came home and told my wife, "We have the house." She asked me, "Where is it?" I told her, "We have it by faith." We both started laughing and praising God.

Sometime after that, a woman came to my Father in law's housing agency needing to rent out her house. My wife took a look at the house and called me. We both went to look at it together and it was everything that we believed God for. We had to pray for the lady to go down on the rent by about \$200.00. God moved and she did.

God does not give substitutes. The devil may try to substitute your request and make you think that it was God. Do not accept it. Stand in faith and believe that you receive exactly what you requested.

Chapter Ten

Error Nine: God Uses Evil To Bring His Children To Maturity

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20)

If you and I are to avoid the above error then we must learn to determine what is good and what is evil. The Word of God, and not men's interpretation, is the standard for discerning what is good and what is evil. God Word is the Word of righteousness and therefore qualified to reveal to us the difference between the two:

*"For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the **word of righteousness**: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. 5:14)*

Because of a lack of Bible knowledge, many Christians, and unfortunately that includes ministers do not really know what God says is good and what He says is evil. Too many of them are calling good what He says is evil and they are calling evil what He says is good. They call things blessings that God specifically said were curses and vice versa.

Some have become so perverted in their thinking that they thank God for these things when they come upon them. They say this as though He were the One responsible for them. Actually, many of these Christians think that He *is* responsible.

Do not misunderstand me. I believe in praising and thanking God when I am going through trials. But I do not thank Him for the trials because I do not believe that He is the One giving them to me.

The book of James teaches us to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:2-4)

Why do trials come? First of all they come for the WORD's sake (Mark 4:16-17). It is the Word of God that produces FAITH (Rom. 10:17). The temptations mentioned in James are the "trying of your faith." They come to find out if faith is truly genuine (1 Pet. 1:5-7).

The trials are actually designed to DESTROY your faith by stealing the Word from you. The person who is trying to do this is Satan (Mark 4:15). He does not want you to have anything the Bible promises because it glorifies God when you receive and he cannot stand that (John 15:7-8). He either wants God's glory for himself or he wants to ensure that God gets none at all.

Satan is the one who comes against your faith. Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to sift him as wheat but He prayed that Peter's faith would FAIL NOT (Luke 22:31-32). The spiritual warfare that we are engaged in is the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12).

If Satan can destroy your faith then he has defeated you. It is only by faith that we overcome (1 John 5:4-5). Therefore it is Satan who brings trials in order to "try your faith."

So why are we told to count it all joy? It is due to that which we gain as a result of standing on God's Word in the midst of the trials. God has made His blessings available but He has never said that they would come easy. The blessings of God are worth fighting for.

The trying of our faith produces patience and it is through faith and patience we inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12). That's why Jesus told us to pray and not give up (Luke 18:1). He knew that when you pray, Satan would try your faith in God (Daniel 10). But if you stand in the midst of the trials then you will learn patience and you will be

perfect and entire, not wanting or lacking anything. You will become and receive all that God has for you.

I wrote all of this to say one thing: God is not the source of our problems. While James tells us the purpose for our trials, he also makes it clear that God is not the source of them:

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with EVIL, neither tempeth he any man." (James 1:13)

The word for "temptations" in James 1:2 comes from the Greek word *"peirasmos."* One of its meanings is *"adversity."* The words *"tempted"* and *"tempeth"* come from the Greek word *"peirazo"* which means to *"scrutinize"* or *"prove."* {1}

The word *"temptations"* in James 1:2 comes from the word *"tempted"* or *"tempeth"* in James 1:13. Therefore, what the Holy Spirit is saying in James 1:13 is that God is not responsible for the temptations against us that are mentioned in James 1:2.

We must also keep in mind that the Bible was not originally written in chapters and verses. These were added later as reference points - and thank God that they were. So there is one continuous theme running through the whole first chapter of James.

As we continue to read the first chapter of James, God distinguishes Himself from being the type of person who sends trials and tribulations. He tells us what kind of God HE is:

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every GOOD and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:16-17)

In James 1:13, God makes it clear that whatever comes to try your faith is EVIL. He is not the source of any evil and takes no pleasure in it (Job 34:10; Ps. 5:4; NIV). All of our lessons so far have endeavored to show you the goodness of God. Here, God says that He is the source of all that is good and perfect.

Anything that is evil has its source in the EVIL ONE, who is Satan (Matt. 6:13; John 17:15; Eph. 6:13). It is an insult to God to accuse Him of Satan's work and it is equally insulting to Him when we give Satan credit for the good things that God does (Matt. 12:22-37).

Bible Definitions of Good and Evil

If we are to avoid the error that many Christians continue to fall into, we must find out exactly what the Bible calls good and what it calls evil. When we do, then we must learn to give its source it's just due.

If it is evil then we must not tolerate or accept it. We must resist it (James 4:7). If it is good, then we must not deny ourselves but we must seek God for it (Matt. 7:7-11).

The Bible is clear concerning what is good and what is evil. You will be surprised since "religion" has stated the opposite concerning these things. Yet, you must make the choice of whether you will believe what the Bible says or what tradition teaches. You will either receive blessing or cursing depending on which way you go.

Sickness is EVIL, Healing Is GOOD

There are those who teach that sickness is good. It makes one more humble, pious, and spiritual. They call it a blessing. They make God it's source. They say that if it's from God then it's a good thing. God's Word tells us something entirely different:

"And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the EVIL diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee: but will lay them upon all them that hate thee." (Deut. 7:15)

What is God's description of sickness and disease? EVIL. God says that He does not tempt (try, test, or prove) anyone with evil, so therefore He could not be the source.

Now someone may ask, "It says at the latter part of that verse that God will lay them upon all that hate thee. Doesn't that make Him the source?" One thing to remember is that the Bible was not originally written in English. The Old Testament was translated from Hebrew and the New Testament was translated from the Greek. When it was written, men had to find the best English word to translate from the original language so that we could understand.

Many words that probably should have been translated to show that God ALLOWED something instead shows Him to be the cause of it. The Word "lay" in Deuteronomy 7:15, according Strong's Concordance, comes from the Hebrew word "nathan" (5414). According to Strong's, this word is used with a great latitude of applications. {2}

In some cases it may mean "appoint, ascribe, assign, charge, ordain, suffer" and it even means "withdraw." Therefore, we could translate that to mean that God "will SUFFER, or appoint, or assign" the sicknesses upon their enemies. This does not however make Him the source of them.

I emphasize the Word suffer for a reason. This word is used in an allowing sense in the Old Testament. In Exodus 12, God had finished sending all kinds of plagues to persuade Pharaoh to let His people go. Pharaoh, being the stubborn hearted devil that he is, refused to comply. So in this chapter, God would send the ultimate plague to Egypt.

God gave instructions on how His own people would avoid this last plague, which would kill all of the firstborn. They had to put the blood of the lamb upon their doorposts. This blood was a "type" of the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus, when applied in faith, will offer us the same protection.

In Exodus 12:12-13 God seems to make Himself responsible. And He is as far as He is the one who has appointed this. But in verse 23 we see that He is not the source:

*"For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not **SUFFER THE DESTROYER** to come in unto your houses to smite you." (Ex. 12:23)*

The word "*suffer*" comes from the same Hebrew word used in Deuteronomy 7:15 that is translated "*lay*." The Amplified Bible translates the latter part of verse 23 this way: "*.....the Lord will pass over the door and will not **ALLOW** the destroyer to come into your houses to slay you.*" The NIV translates the word suffer as "*permit*." So you see "*lay*" in Deut. 7:15 can be used in the "allowing" sense and not just the "causative."

God also shows us that the destroyer was the one who would actually do the smiting. Had the Israelites not applied the blood by faith, the destroyer would have been just as happy to smite them too. When we see all of this in its contextual setting, you see that most Scriptures that are translated in a "causative" sense should be translated in an "allowing" sense.

Many scholars study the Greek and Hebrew but they do so with a prejudiced mind. Many of them interpret the language to fit their denominational and theological positions. This is why when you interpret from the Greek or Hebrew you must find where the word is used in other passages to get its full meaning.

The plague came upon Egypt because of disobedience. Sickness and disease come upon people today because of sin. It may not always be a sin they committed but because of sin that is in the world. The best place of protection from sickness and disease is to get under the blood of Jesus.

The "destroyer" is Satan because he is the one who steals, kills, and destroys. Jesus' purpose is to deliver you from Satan's works:

*"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing **GOOD**, and healing all that were oppressed of the **DEVIL**; for God was with him." (Acts 10:38)*

What was the GOOD that Jesus went about doing? He HEALED all that were being oppressed with sickness. The Bible shows us that healing is GOOD. Its source is from God.

The Bible also shows us the source of sickness: *"...healing all that were oppressed of the DEVIL."* Sickness is evil and has its source in the evil one. So God is not the responsible one.

Poverty Is EVIL, Prosperity Is GOOD

Jesus told a story about a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus. The rich man disobeyed God's laws by ignoring the needs around him though he prospered. The rich man dies and went to hell. The poor man died and went into the bosom of Abraham.

The rich man was so tormented in flames that he asked Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and bring it to cool his tongue. Abraham responded in this manner:

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy GOOD THINGS, and likewise Lazarus EVIL THINGS: but now he is comforted, and thou art in torment." (Luke 16:25)

The rich man did not go to hell because he was rich. If that was true then Abraham should have been there too because the Bible says that he was VERY RICH (Gen. 13:2). The rich man went to hell because he blatantly disobeyed God's laws. The law said that they were not to harden their hearts towards their poor brother or shut their hand from him (Deut. 15:4-11).

Yet Abraham points out that the rich man's riches were GOOD and Lazarus's poverty was EVIL. It is not a sin to be poor just as it is not a sin to be sick, but God has made provisions for both by giving GOOD THINGS to those that ask (Matt. 7:11).

In Deuteronomy 28 God tells us the blessings of obedience and the curses for disobedience. In the blessings we see such things as

healing, prosperity, victory, etc. In the curses we see sickness, disease, poverty, and defeat. In verse 30 God gives His commentary on these things:

"I have set before thee this day life and GOOD, and death and EVIL." (Deut. 30:15)

In verse 19 He even tells us the one who desires that we choose:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore CHOOSE LIFE, that thou and thy seed may live." (Deut. 30:19)

God wants us to choose LIFE. He wants us to be BLESSED, not CURSED. He wants us to have GOOD, not EVIL. Yet the choice is not His but Ours. We must choose. He has established laws whereby we are guaranteed His goodness. The Lord is the source of that which is GOOD:

"Yea, the Lord shall give that which is GOOD; and our land shall increase." (Ps. 85:12)

So we can see that the Bible is very clear in its distinction of good and evil. I am sure that there are other questions that would arise because of the religious teachings that have been in the church for years. However, we can not address everything in this one chapter. However, we will study this subject in more detail in another book.

This chapter is meant to be a faith builder to those who can accept this truth without reserve. It is not meant to answer theological debates. People will believe what they want to believe no matter how much proof we give them. For you who desire to know the truth, this was written for you. Receive those good things God has for you. Do not accept any evil, but resist it and God will bless you.

Chapter Eleven

Error Ten: The Old Testament Promises Are For The Jews Only (Part One)

Tradition and religion have continually put God's people in bondage. I will never understand why men have spent most of their waking hours trying to find ways to destroy the faith of Christians instead of building it up.

The error mentioned above has been used many times to keep God's people from the best that He has made available for us. Whenever one finds a promise of health, long life, or any of the other wonderful benefits mentioned in the Old Testament, we are told that applied only to the Jews and is not for us today. The source of this error is primarily advocated by some who teach an extreme form of *dispensationalism*. Dispensationalism is a prominent teaching in most circles in the church.

Although this doctrine does well in explaining how God has governed man in different periods of the Bible, it is dangerous when taken to the extreme that some do when they deny the promises of the Old Testament in the life of the New Testament believer. The late Baptist minister, Arthur W. Pink, had some strong words to say against those who teach against the authority of the Old Testament:

These mutilators of the Word tell us that all of the Old Testament from Genesis 12 onwards belongs entirely to Israel after the flesh, and that none of its precepts (as such) are binding upon those who are members of the Church which is the Body of Christ, nor may any of the promises found therein be legitimately appropriated by them. And this, be it duly noted, *without* a single word to that effect by either the Lord or any of His Apostles, *and despite* the use which the Holy Spirit makes of the earliest Scriptures in every part of the New Testament.[1]

The late Arthur W. Pink was a Calvinist.[2] I am not. Pink often taught and wrote things concerning the sovereignty of God that I

take time to refute in this book. Pink and I have strong disagreements in many areas of doctrine. As a matter of fact, I cannot totally agree with Pink's assessment of all dispensationalists. Many dispensationalists do not go to the extreme of denying the relevance of Old Testament promises in the life of the New Testament believer. Nevertheless, Pink and I are in total agreement concerning the place of the Old Testament in the life of today's Christian and we both disagree with those who would deny its authority and blessing in our lives. Pink goes on to say:

What is true of the Old Testament precepts (generally speaking, for there are, of course, exceptions to every rule) holds equally good to the Old Testament promises—believers today are fully warranted in mixing faith therewith and expecting to receive the substance of them. First, because those promises were made to saints as such, and what God gives to one He gives to all (2 Pet. 1:4)—Christ purchased the self-same blessings for every one of His redeemed. Second, because most of the Old Testament promises were typical in their nature: earthly blessings adumbrated heavenly ones. That is no arbitrary assertion of ours, for anyone who has been taught of God knows that almost everything during the old economies had a figurative meaning, shadowing forth the better things to come. Many proofs of this will be given by us a little later. Third, a *literal* fulfillment to us of those promises must not be excluded, for since we be still on earth and in the body our temporal needs are the same as theirs, and if we meet the conditions attached to those promises (either expressed or implied), then we may count upon the fulfillment of them: according unto our faith and obedience so will it be unto us.[3]

Those who take dispensationalism to the extreme that Pink and I disagree with would be better described as *Marcionans*. Not all dispensationalists subscribe to the error of this heretic. This was a man in the second century of the church who denied the place of the Old Testament in our lives. He was fiercely opposed by the church fathers. We will discuss him further in the next chapter.

Recently I read a book in which the author's emphasis was teaching how the Bible can be applied. There was a chapter in the book on how to apply promises. In this book he stated that many Old Testament promises could not be applied because they were only for Israel. Then he went on to use Malachi 3:10 as an example of a promise that was meant only for Israel. Malachi 3:10 is the Scripture

most commonly used to teach the blessings that derive as a result of tithes and offerings.

In 1985 I was in the Air Force assigned to Edwards AFB in California when I received notice of reassignment to Korea. I sent my wife and 10 month old daughter to her home in Okinawa, Japan since I was could not bring my family. This left me with the sole responsibility of checking out of base quarters.

Before one checks out of base quarters they must go through an inspection by the base housing office. An inspector came to the house and noticed a burn hole on top of the porcelain countertop. My wife had taken a burning pot from the stove and placed it there by accident. The inspector rightly felt that it was my responsibility to pay for it. After checking, he decided that the whole countertop would have to be replaced and it would cost me about two hundred dollars.

I did not have two hundred dollars to just give away. I had already paid from my own pocket the flight and expenses to get my wife and daughter back to Japan. The only thing I could do was turn to the Lord.

I reminded the Lord that I had faithfully paid my tithes and gave offerings. I reminded Him of what He said that He would do as a result of my giving. One of the Scriptures I brought to God was Mal. 3:8-12. The next day, the inspector came over and asked, "How do you want to pay for this? Do you want us to deduct it from your paycheck or would you like to pay cash?" I told him that I would pay cash. I did not know where I would get the money from but I believed the promise in Malachi.

The very next morning I was outside cleaning the front yard for final inspection when the inspector drove by. He stopped his car and said, "Sgt Edwards, just forget about the payment." I asked him, "Are you saying I don't owe anything?" He told me, "Don't worry about it. It's taken care of" and drove off. I never paid one dime for that countertop.

I was expecting God to send someone by with two hundred dollars and say, "the Lord told me to give this to you." Yet, He did it in an unexpected way. Nevertheless, I claimed an Old Testament promise and it was fulfilled in my life. Some have theological concepts for Scriptures and others experience the Scriptures. Do you want the former or the latter?

If we study the Bible instead of listening to what man say then we will find something totally different:

"ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is PROFITABLE for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16)

I like the way the Contemporary English Version translates this verse: *"Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live."* So we see that everything in the Scriptures is God's Word and can be used for every area of our lives. The Old and New Testament can be applied as long as the Old Testament is translated in the light of the New.

The KJV says that the scripture is PROFITABLE. I like that word better. God's Word is given to us so that we can PROFIT from it. Profitable means "to your advantage" or "for your gain." Therefore you have God's word to give you an advantage over the devil. It is he who does not want you to appropriate the blessings of God.

Every promise that God has made available to you is meant to counterattack some area that the devil is trying to gain a foothold in your life. Yet when you know ALL of the promises you will have an advantage over him. Many of these promises are found in the Old Testament. That is why Satan has tried to discourage God's people from claiming those Old Testament promises.

The Scriptures are for your *gain*. God has made many things available to us in both Testaments and He is not the God of *loss* but of *gain*. God has given us His Word for our sakes because He loves us. Yet many have twisted the word and have used it to bring bondage instead of profit to God's people. People have suffered loss instead of enjoying gain because of wrong theology.

Romans 4 teaches us that what was written to Abraham was not written for him alone. It was written for our sakes as well:

"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it [righteousness] was imputed to him; But FOR US

ALSO, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." (Rom. 4:23-24)

God did not have Abraham's experiences recorded for historical purposes only. The experience of Abraham and others who lived during Old Testament times was written for you and I. Notice that Paul wrote this book to the Christians in Rome, not the Jews in Israel. Therefore God is using Paul to tell us that the father of the Jewish race, Abraham, had experiences that we Gentiles were supposed to learn from.

Paul is telling us here that an OLD TESTAMENT Scripture was actually written for our sakes. This proves that when Paul tells Timothy that ALL Scripture is profitable then he is referring to the Old Testament as well as the New.

Since all Scripture is for our profit and is written for our sakes then we can claim promises from the Old Testament as well as the New. The Bible itself shows that everything that God promised the Jews also belongs to the Church in this dispensation.

Romans 4 is teaching us how Abraham applied faith to receive the promises that God gave him. We are exhorted to apply the same faith in receiving what he received. When God called Abraham, who is the father of Israel, He made some wonderful promises to him:

"Now the Lord said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED." (Gen. 12:1-3)

Notice that God wanted to bless Abraham in order that he would be a blessing. God does not give His blessings for us to hoard them up for ourselves. He blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. One cannot bless others until they have first been blessed. God

encourages us to help the poor, but this would be difficult if we are poor ourselves. That's the reason for financial prosperity, to help the poor and needy.

God did not plan for only the nation of Israel to receive the blessings of Abraham. Israel would be the CHANNEL by which the blessings of Abraham would be conferred to the rest of the world. God's original intent in using Abraham was so that in him ALL the families of the earth could receive a blessing.

Some people believe that in the Old Testament God was only concerned about the nation of Israel and then in the New Testament when this nation rejected the Messiah, only then did He decide to include the Gentiles. It has always been God's plan to bring salvation to the world. He chose Israel to be His channel.

He wanted a nation who knew Him and through whom He could display His power, mercy and love. When the surrounding nations would see how God was blessing Israel, then they would turn from their idols and turn to the God of the Jews.

As Abraham began to further obey God, God gave him more insight into the promise that He made

"And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee AND THY SEED after thee in their generations for an EVERLASTING COVENANT, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." (Gen. 17:6-7)

When we obey God in the things He tells us then we will also receive further revelation in the things of God.

Notice the word "nations." This word has an "s" at the end and therefore that makes it *plural*, which means more than one. Israel was only ONE nation so this promise could not apply to them only. This promise had a wider application.

Also notice that it was an EVERLASTING covenant that God made. This means that these promises did not cease after a certain time. Theologians like to use dispensational theology to prove that

God's promises in the Old Testament applied only to those of that time. Many of them also use this same theology to prove that the miracles and gifts of the New Testament have ceased. If we listened to them, we may as well close our Bibles and never read them because we can have nothing.

Yet Roman shows us exactly how God's covenant with Abraham applies to those of us under the New Testament:

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to ALL THE SEED; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; WHO IS THE FATHER OF US ALL. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)" (Rom. 4:16-17a)

Abraham was the channel of blessing to ALL the families of the earth. The covenant of blessing that God established with Abraham was an everlasting one. It was a promise to all of the seed. When the King James Version uses the word "seed," it is referring to "children" in this case.

That seed is us. The promises that God made to Abraham are "sure" to us as his seed. This word sure means "inevitable, guaranteed, bound to happen." The promise of blessing that God made to Abraham is inevitable, guaranteed, and bound to happen in the lives of all of the children of Abraham. The Scripture goes on to say that Abraham is the father of us all.

Paul, when writing this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was referring to Genesis 17, the passage we quoted earlier. In verse 8 of this chapter it talks about the giving of the land of Canaan to the seed. We already know that the physical land of Canaan applies to the Jews only. Yet Paul takes the portion of the promise that applies to us ALL and quotes that part.

The land of Canaan does represent, or is a type of the blessings, rights, and privileges that belong to us as believers. But modern day theologians get so caught up in the physical land that they naturally assume that none of the promises that belong to the Jews apply to us. They will point to such Scriptures and say: "See, it could only be

speaking of the Jews because we as Christians are not promised the land of Canaan."

Some men become so "theological" that it causes them to be "unscriptural." The Bible makes it plain and clear that whatever God has promised Abraham as a result of the covenant applies to us also. Romans 4 is not the only one that brings out this fact. Paul expounds upon this theme again in Galatians:

"For ye are all the children of God by FAITH in Christ Jesus. For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither JEW NOR GREEK, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, THEN ARE YE ABRAHAM'S SEED, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-29)

The Everyday Bible translates Galatians 3:29 this way: *"You belong to Christ. So you are Abraham's descendants. You get ALL of God's blessings because of the promise that God made to Abraham."*

The Living Bible paraphrases verse 29 well: *"And now that we are Christ's we are the true descendants of Abraham, and all of God's promises to him belong to us."* Everyone who accepts Christ are Abraham's seed, not just Israel. In verse 28 we see that God does not recognize one particular race of people in Christ. We are all descendants of Abraham and we are all eligible to receive every covenant promise God made to Israel because of him.

So we see from these passages that everything that God ever promised Abraham has been made available to you and I also. When Israel was traveling through the wilderness on their way to the land of Canaan, God made some wonderful promises that could be claimed as a result of obedience.

Hebrews 4 speaks of the promises made to Israel in the wilderness. The Message by Eugene Peterson paraphrases verses 1-3:

"For as long, then, as that promise of resting in him pulls us on to God's goal for us, we need to be careful

that we're not disqualified. We received the same promises as those in the wilderness, but the promises didn't do them a bit of good because they didn't receive the promises with faith."

So we see from this passage, and I believe that this is a correct paraphrase, that the same promises that Israel received belong to us today also. This is due to the fact that God desired to bless ALL the families of the earth through Israel, not just this one nation alone.

Notice however that the promises did them no good. The reason they stayed in the wilderness is because they believed their circumstances over the promises of God. God promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. They sent twelve spies into the land and ten of them gave an evil report. The majority believed the evil report and decided they wanted to make them a new leader and go back to Egyptian bondage (see Number 13-14).

The Old Testament promises have been made available to God's people today but like Israel, they will not do us a bit of Good unless we receive these promises with faith. That is why Satan is on a campaign to destroy faith in the promises of God and will use every means available to do it.

Jesus purpose for coming to the earth was not to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17-18). The law was fulfilled in Christ. Therefore, every Old Testament promise that comes as a result of keeping the law is ours because Jesus fulfilled the law and we are in Him.

I am a supporter of the nation of Israel. The book of Revelation clearly shows that God is going to restore that nation back to its original purpose. Israel is still the chosen people of God. However, when it comes to the rights and privileges of the covenant, those who have accepted Christ have every right to them because God is dealing with a SPIRITUAL seed as well as a physical one.

In our next chapter, we will see more proof that Old Testament promises still belong to us today by seeing how the writers of the epistles applied Old Testament promises when writing to the churches.

Chapter Twelve

Error Ten: The Old Testament Promises Are For The Jews Only (Part Two)

In our last lesson we saw that there are many who claim that Christians are not allowed to claim Old Testament promises because these promises were only meant for the Jews. We saw through a study of many Old and New Testament Scripture that this was an error because as children of Abraham, who was the father of the nation of Israel, all Old Testament promises are available to God's children today by faith in Christ Jesus.

As stated in the last lesson, we can trace this *disdain* for the Old Testament as far back as the second century of the church. About 138 A.D., a rich ship owner named Marcion from Sinope (northern Turkey) began to teach that the Old Testament was inferior to the New Testament and should not be in the canon of Scripture that currently makes up our Bible. This truly offended the church fathers such as Tertullian, Ireneaus, and others and they severely opposed him through their writings. It is to be noted that Marcion had been influenced by false Gnostic beliefs. John Bright points out:

It is impossible to understand Marcion and the impact of his teachings apart from Gnosticism, a strange mishmash of philosophical and religious speculation which in various forms swept over the ancient world in the early centuries of our era and attracted so many adherents that Gnostic sects became a rival to orthodox Christianity. Now one cannot generalize regarding Gnostic beliefs, for the various Gnostic systems differed from one another chaotically. But one feature was common to them all: a dualistic notion of the universe, together with the belief that the material world is originally and incurably evil. This, of course, made the creation of the world a theological problem for them: If the world is thus evil, how could the good God have made it? Their answer was that he did not do so.[1]

If Marcion subscribed to any part of this Gnostic teaching then it would seem convenient for him to have the OT done away with which proclaims God as the creator of this world. Bright goes on to

say that, "This strange doctrine logically led, and in fact did lead, to a drastic devaluation of the Old Testament." Some may read this and say that they would never fall into the type of error that Marcion advocated. Yet, if you have relegated the Old Testament to a place inferior to the New Testament, then you have given yourself over to the same spirit of error as this man. If you believe that certain promises and moral teachings have no place with the New Testament believer then I am afraid that you have, without realizing it, embraced Marcionism:

... for there is - if I know the situation at all – not a little neo-Marcionism in our churches. It has no official standing – indeed, under that name it scarcely exists at all – but it is unofficially present nonetheless: call it a practical Marcionism, an implicit Marcionism, an inconsequent Marcionism, or what you will. That is to say, there are people who never heard of Marcion and who would be horrified to learn of the company they are in but who nevertheless use the Old Testament in a distinctly Marcionist manner. Formally, and no doubt sincerely, they hail it as canonical Scripture; but in practice they relegate it to a subordinate position, if they do not effectively exclude it from use altogether.[2]

Dr. Marvin R. Wilson, author of "Our Father Abraham" would also agree with Mr. Bright that neo-Marcionism has crept into the present day church:

"Though often cunningly concealed, in today's Church rather strong vestiges of Marcionism have survived. But we are polite. Hardly aware of its subtle presence, we do not call it 'Neo-Marcionism,' 'heresy,' or 'anti-Judaism.' Nevertheless, in our concerted effort to be 'New Testament' believers, we have too often unconsciously minimized the place and importance of the Old Testament and the Church's Hebraic roots. At worst, many so called Bible-believing Christians have become de facto 'quarter-of-the-Bible' adherents (the New Testament has 260 chapters compared to the Old Testament's 929 chapters); at best, they rely on a 'loose-leaf' edition of the Old Testament (i.e., they select only a few portions of the Old Testament), in addition to the New Testament. This selectivity has had the effect of neglecting the totality of written revelation, severing the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith, and thus eroding the full authority of the Holy Scriptures.[3]

Yet, if we are truly New Testament believers, we could honestly say that we find no trace of this heresy in its pages. The New Testament writers seemed to have a strong reverence for the Old Testament. As we study the New Testament epistles, we find on several occasions that the writers are quoting promises from the Old Testament as though they still applied to us today. This is more assurance that we can appropriate for ourselves the promises of health, wealth, fruitfulness, victory, and other wonderful blessings mentioned in the Old Testament.

Paul continues to prove that God meant for us to appropriate promises in the Old Testament as well as the New because he reminds God's covenant people of them on certain occasions. One of those occasions is found in Ephesians six while giving practical advice on family matters:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise: That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. 6:1-3)

Paul is quoting from Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. Here, God was giving Israel the Ten Commandments through Moses. In Deuteronomy 5:16, God made reference to the land that they were about to inherit. But again, Paul only applies the part of the promise that applies to us universally as a Church.

Many teach that we are no longer under the law and this is true. Yet, they add that many of the promises of God were meant for those under the law. Here we have an example of a promise in the New Testament that was made under the law but still available to God's children even today.

Paul tells us in Galatians that the law could not disannul God's covenant to Abraham:

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, [that] the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” (Gal. 3:16-17)

Christ fulfilled the law for us and now we have the Spirit of God living in us so that we don't have to try to keep a set of rules to live right. The Holy Spirit gives us power and enables us to walk in a way that pleases God when we put our trust in Him (Gal. 5:16-26).

However, just because we are no longer under the law does not mean that God has done away with the promises for obedience. We may not be under the law but that does not mean that we are no longer to be blessed. Jesus kept the law perfectly and now He lives in us to enable us to keep the moral law of God. Therefore God's blessings cannot be done away with.

The law had nothing to do with God's promises to Israel. The promises to Israel were based on the Abrahamic covenant. The Bible says that the law was given as a schoolmaster (Gal. 3:23-25). God was using this law to show the Israelites (and us) that we could never measure up to His standards on our own. We need His help (Acts 15:1-10). We have no power to keep God's standards. Jesus lives in us by the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live holy.

Furthermore, God promised Abraham those blessings 430 years before the law so therefore the law has nothing to do with God's provision to us due to His covenant with Abraham. The Old Testament promises are based on the covenant that God made with Abraham. We are claiming the Abrahamic covenant and not a covenant of law and works.

So Ephesians 6:1-3 is an example of an Old Testament promise being made available to those under the New Covenant, as long as the condition is fulfilled. The law could not disannul this promise of long life on the earth and make this promise of no effect.

Paul also shows how promises of financial blessings are for God's people today by applying Old Testament Scripture:

“But this [I say], He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for [your] food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.” (2 Cor. 9:6-11)

The Scripture Paul is quoting here comes from Psalm 112:9. The laws of sowing and reaping are still available today. Furthermore it is not waiting until we get to heaven to reap our harvest. We can reap right here on earth because it is God who *disperses abroad*.

Notice the word *bountiful*. God does not want His people to only have a little. God wants us to abound. Many are telling us that we have no guarantee of prosperity under the new covenant. Yet here is a promise that is plain and clear before us.

Paul himself was not a poor man. Paul knew how to be abased and how to be abound (Phil. 4:12). Because the devil wants to keep Christians in a poverty mentality, he likes to use Theologians to focus on Paul being abased. Yet, Paul says he knew how to be both and how to handle each when they came his way.

He knew how to abound and he gave us principles on how we can do it. I personally believe that aside from Jesus Christ our Lord, Paul was probably the greatest man of faith who ever lived. I am sure that he would not give us principles that he himself did not live by. Paul knew God and he knew God’s Word. He knew how to apply the whole of the Word.

The writer of Hebrews (who I personally believe was Paul also) shows us another Old Testament promise being made available to new covenant people:

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly SAY, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13:5-6)

These promises were taken from Joshua 1:5, Deuteronomy 31:6 and 8, Psalm 27:1 and 118:6. I have heard people say that the promises in Joshua chapter one were for Joshua ONLY. I cannot agree in light of the fact that the writer of Hebrews is quoting from this very chapter and telling us that it still applies. The promises in Joshua still belong to us but we must use wisdom and receive insight from the Holy Spirit so that He can show us HOW they apply.

One thing is for sure. We must speak God's promises (Mark 11:23). The writer here *says "that we may boldly SAY..."* We must learn to line our confession up with God's Word if we want the results of His Word in our lives. Most Christians are defeated in life because of the words of their own mouth.

Do you want God as your helper? I guarantee you that you could not get better help for the circumstances and situations that confront us in life. Yet, we must confess that God is our helper and God will act on His Word on our behalf. Do you want to lose your fear of man? Speak the promise of God boldly and it will happen for you.

Peter and Old Testament Promises

God uses the Apostle Peter also to show us that we can claim Old Testament promises:

"Finally, [be ye] all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, [be] pitiful, [be] courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for

railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord [are] over the righteous, and his ears [are open] unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord [is] against them that do evil.” (1 Pet. 3:8-12)

Peter is quoting from Psalm 34:12-16. There is a reference made to inheriting the land in this Psalm but Peter only makes mention of that which applies to the universal church. Nevertheless, the promises mentioned in the Psalms as well as other parts of the Old Testament are not just for the Jews but for us also and we have every right to claim them.

James and Old Testament Promises

James uses an example from the Old Testament to show us that God's power and promises are still available to us today:

"Confess your faults one to another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not in the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (James 5:16-18)

James used an example from the Old Testament to teach the truth of prayer. He shows us that Elijah, whom we all consider to be a great prophet of God, was a man subject to the same passions that you and I have. He was no different from us. Therefore, God would do the same for us as He did for Elijah.

Notice that both James and Peter refer to the righteousness of the Believer in relation to prayer. Peter relates answered prayer in connection with our right living while James relates it to our imputed righteousness. Christ has become righteousness for us (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21), yet this righteousness must show itself in the way that we live.

God does not answer prayers based on self righteousness but on the righteousness of His only begotten Son. When we go before God in prayer as Elijah did, God does not see our past sins, He sees the shed blood of Jesus which cleanses us and puts us in right standing with the Father. Therefore we are entitled to have our prayers answered.

When we pray in faith as Elijah did then we can get the same results that he received. Here is an Old Testament truth being made available to New Testament people.

This passage has been a great source of inspiration to me on many occasions. On one occasion a friend was helping me to move to a new house. He had a pickup truck and I had a van and we did all of the moving with these two vehicles.

It was a nice sunny day outside and we foresaw no problems moving the furniture with his pickup. So we loaded some wooden furniture in the truck and some stuff in my van and we went to unload it at my new quarters. While I was driving behind him, it began to rain. I became very concerned about the water soaking through the furniture and ruining it. I then began to command the rain to cease.

It did not stop right away and the devil said to me, “see, that stuff doesn’t work.” I then began to sing praises to God. When I began to praise God the rain ceased. When we got to the house I told my friend what had happened. He told me, “Troy I did the same thing and I began to sing the same praise song to God. “ God moved on both of our hearts to do the same thing. God is still hearing the prayers of His people for the weather just as He heard Elijah’s.

If God did such great and wonderful things for people like Elijah under the Old Covenant then we should expect just as much, if not more under the New Covenant because ours is better:

"But now he [Jesus] hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a BETTER covenant, which was established upon BETTER promises." (Rom. 8:6)

The promises of healing, prosperity, and long life in the Old Testament can apply to those of us in the New Testament because our covenant and our promises are BETTER. We should be able to have just as much (if not more than) as the children of Israel. If this is not true than they had a better covenant under the law of works than we do under grace.

I do not see the logic in that. God is not stingy. Satan has simply deceived ministers into bringing unscriptural teaching into the church. It seems that some men have made efforts to come up with doctrines that will deny God's people any of the blessings God has made available for us today.

Now many teachers say that our covenant is better in a *spiritual sense*. They say that in the Old Testament the people had no new birth. They had to confess their sins to a priest who offered sacrifices for them. They had to offer animal sacrifices for sin every year and this only covered their sin, it did not take it away. Only certain people were anointed with the Holy Spirit. Now, in our day, Jesus has made one sacrifice for us by His blood. We can go directly to God ourselves without a priest. We can receive a new birth. Every Christian has an anointing abiding in him or her.

All of these things are true and we should praise God for them. These things are very important. However, we still live in a physical world. We still have physical bodies. Therefore we still have physical needs and desires. If all of the physical blessings of the old covenant has been done away with then in a sense, the old covenant is still better than the new one that you and I have. This cannot be true. Such teachings originate with the traditions of men and not the Word of God. If you and I will look to the Word of God and not the traditions of men, we will be free to appropriate all that God has for us.

Some years ago I was at work when I sensed urgency in my spirit to call my wife's office. When I called, a coworker answered the phone. I asked her if I could speak with my wife. She said, "Troy, you didn't know?"

“Know what?” I asked.

“Tricia (my daughter) got sick and they called an ambulance to come get her. Takako is at the hospital with her right now.”

After I hung up the phone I was all alone in the computer room where I worked. I began to pray in other tongues and interceded for my daughter. As I was praying, two Scriptures rose up from my spirit. The first one was Psalm 91:10: *“There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.”* and also Exodus 23:25: *“And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.”*

The Lord reminded me that Tricia as my daughter was a part of my household and therefore these promises applied to her. Yet these were Old Testament promises. I was not indoctrinated with dispensational theology so no doubts came to mind that these were for me. I began to thank God for His promises and I commanded the devil to take his hands off of my child.

After spending some time in prayer I closed up and went home. Some time later my wife, daughter, and mother in law came home and were full of joy. My wife told me, “Honey, Tricia was sick and we had to call an ambulance to take her to the hospital. When she got there they stuck an IV in her arm. But suddenly she began to feel better and asked for something to eat. So the doctor released her and we went to get something to eat.”

However, the devil did not give up so easy. He attacked her again that same night. While she was trying to sleep she had a terrible time trying to breathe. However, I stood by her bedside with my Bible in my hand quoting Psalm 91:10 to God and the devil. I reminded God of His promise and thanked Him for it. I reminded the devil that he did not belong in my dwelling and commanded him to leave. He most certainly left that night.

These were Old Testament promises that God gave me and God honored them. God honors His Word, both Old and New Testament. We do not need to be afraid to claim the blessings of God found in the Old Testament because we think that they were for the Jews only. These promises still belong to God’s children today and we have just as much of a right to enjoy them as all of the Old Testament saints did.

Chapter Thirteen

Error Eleven: Miracles Have Ceased From the Church

In the church today, there are three views concerning miracles. The first view says that all miracles have passed away and God does not do them anymore. Some of these people even try to explain away the miracles in the Bible.

Most Evangelicals are starting to take hold of the second view. They believe that God **MAY** work a miracle such as heal a sick body, cast out a devil, or even allow someone to speak in tongues if it is His will. What this implies is that it may **not always** be the will of God to do these things.

The third view is what is commonly known as the Charismatic and/or Word of Faith view. This view says that all miracles are for today and it is the will of God to perform them in the life of every believer. Although I do not like to put labels or tags on myself (such as calling myself Charismatic or Word of Faith), I say without reservation that I hold to the third view.

God Does Not Change

The first view says that all miracles ceased after the apostolic age. We now have the full canon of Scripture so there is no longer any need for the miraculous. Miracles were for the infant church and we have gone beyond that stage now.[1]

We will look at the Scripture that is used to prove this view, but first let us establish a foundation. God has made it clear that He is a God that never changes:

"For I am the Lord, I change not....." (Mal. 3:6)

God does not change even in the area of His giving good and perfect gifts to the church:

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17; NIV)

Jesus Christ, who performed miracles before during His time on earth and after His resurrection and ascension (Mark 16:20) is still the same Jesus now as He was then:

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Heb. 13:8)

Lastly, God does not change His mind concerning the Word which He has spoken. His Word reveals His will for our lives:

"God is not a man. He will not lie. God is not a human being. He does not change his mind. What he says he will do, he does. What he promises, he keeps." (Num. 23:19; The Everyday Bible)

"God wanted to prove that his promise was true. He wanted to prove this to those who would get what he promised. He wanted them to understand clearly that HIS PURPOSES NEVER CHANGE. So God proved his promise by also making an oath." (Heb. 6:17; The Everyday Bible)

"God cannot tell lie! And so his promises and vows are two things that can NEVER BE CHANGED...." (Heb. 6:18; CEV)

Since God does not change His mind concerning those things that He promised, then miracles of healing, deliverance, supernatural provision, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit has to be for us today.

God has never changed. His Word has never changed. What has happened is that man has changed the concept of God to fit their denominational and theological beliefs. They have twisted God's Word to prove their incorrect doctrines.

Many of these men are truly born again, they love God, and are sincere. Many of them have even taught things from the Bible that have blessed my life and walk with Christ. Yet, these same men have a hard time accepting the fact that God did not withdraw His gifts and miracles. They have a difficult time believing that miracles are for the church today.

Others are not so sincere and will spend many of their waking hours trying to prove their "cessationist theology." Many of them twist the Scriptures to make them explain their doctrine. We will look at one of the most widely used Scriptures in the "cessation error":

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away with." (1 Cor. 13:8-10)

This Scripture is used to prove that Paul was telling the Corinthian church that someday, all of these gifts would cease. They specially use this against us "tongue talkers." Speaking in tongues has had more attacks by fundamentalists and evangelicals than any other gift of the Spirit. Many of those who believe that healing is for the church today have had a difficulty accepting the doctrine of speaking in tongues. Most people in the Missionary Alliance church believe in the gifts but believe that the majority of tongues speaking that they have encountered were demonic.

Nevertheless, this is the foundation scripture for cessationist theology. They say that the time has come for "tongues" (as well as other miracles) to cease. Yet if we are going to translate one part of the Scripture this way, we must take the whole thing in context. We must also say that KNOWLEDGE has vanished away. Now isn't that ridiculous to say that there is no more knowledge today? If that does

sound ridiculous then it is just as ridiculous to interpret the "ceasing of tongues" in such a manner.

In verse 10 we find the statement, *"But when that which is perfect is come....."* There are different opinions on what this mean. I believe that this refers to the second coming of the Lord. I will show you why I believe this in a moment. First, let's look at how the cessationists look at this verse.

Fundamentalists interpret this as the full canon of Scripture coming into being. In other words, when all of the Epistles were finally written and all sixty-six books of Scripture were compiled into one Bible, then this is that which was perfect. That which is perfect (the Bible) has come and now that which is in part (the miracles) have been done away with.

Perfection Requires Supernatural Power

If this Scripture is to be interpreted that way then we have missed the boat. The Bible can only be perfect as far as God will empower it to work in our lives. Jesus showed us that God's Word and His power worked corporately:

"And Jesus answering said unto them, do ye not therefore err [I almost believe that He's speaking to modern day fundamentalists], because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?" (Mark 12:24)

According to Strong's, the word power comes from the Greek word *DUNAMIS* (1411) {1} which means "miraculous power." If you do not know the Scriptures, it is highly unlikely that you will come to know God's miraculous intervention in your life.

The Scriptures open the door for the miraculous in our lives. When the disciples obeyed Jesus by preaching the Word of God, the Lord backed His WORD with miraculous power:

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming THE WORD WITH SIGNS FOLLOWING. Amen." (Mark 16:20)

Now the cessationist theologians have an argument for this too. They say that the original manuscripts did not contain Mark 16:9-20, so therefore they cannot be for us today. The devil sure comes up with some good ones.

There are over 4200 Greek manuscripts and only TWO do not include these verses. Two out of 4200 are not the best statistics that are sufficient to prove that God meant to leave the miraculous out of the church.

Many of the early church fathers quote from the disputed verses in their writings. This further indicates their genuineness. Furthermore, if we're going to exclude these passages based on TWO manuscripts out of 4200, then we must also reject other passages such as the first 46 chapters of Genesis, Psalm 105-137, and Hebrews 9:14-13:25. These passages are found missing in some of the original manuscripts also.

Once again we see the ridiculousness of the cessationist argument. God continues even today to confirm His Word with signs following. People can argue all they like about Mark 16:20 but they can never deny Jeremiah 1:12:

".....for I hasten my word to PERFORM IT." (Jer. 1:12)

If 1 Corinthians 13:10 is speaking of the Scripture becoming a complete canon, then we should expect even more miracles because the Word of God is anointed to perform miracles. God will perform His promises of healing, deliverance and other things because He must keep His Word. That's what makes His Word PERFECT.

I believe that 1 Corinthians 13:10 is speaking of the second coming of Christ. The Bible tells us that the miraculous gifts were not to cease until His coming:

"Now you have every grace and blessing; every spiritual gift and power for doing his will are yours during this time of waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:7; The Living Bible)

God wants us to win the lost while we are waiting for His return. Sinners do not respond to one's great expository and expositional preaching skills. Sinners are not moved by sweet organ music and classical choir music. It is the miraculous that draws the attention of most sinners.

If we preach salvation then God will save. If we preach healing then God will heal. If we preach on the other miracles God will perform them. I have personally seen Him do it. I desire to see even more and I refuse to let any theologian or fundamentalist talk me out of it.

The True Reason Why Churches Do Not Experience God's Power

If churches are not seeing the miraculous power of God displayed in their midst then there is only one reason for it, and that is unbelief:

"And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matt. 13:58)

Jesus could not perform many mighty works due to unbelief while He was on earth. Even though He is in heaven now, He is still hindered by the unbelief of His people. We have been so indoctrinated that these things have passed away that it's hard for most people to believe otherwise.

Even those who do believe that God does such things today put their clause of unbelief on it: "If it be thy will." Of course it's His will if He told us that we must believe in order to see it:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that BELIEVETH on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12)

Faith can never go any further than God's revealed will. God has made His will known in His Word. It is by hearing His Word that we appropriate faith for the miraculous (Rom. 10:17).

The main reason for the lack of the miraculous in the church is a lack of knowledge. Paul did not want the Corinthians to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1) and neither does God want you and I ignorant today. It has been a lack of knowledge that has destroyed the church in this area (Hos. 4:6).

Too many men do not see the importance of the miraculous. They believe that education and good sermon preparation is all that is necessary. Paul did not think so. He did not rely on his ability to preach or any other natural talent. He came to them demonstrating the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Most sinners have a need to know that God is real. They are drawn to the miraculous. That's why many of them read horoscopes, join witches' covens, have séances, become New Agers, join cults, etc. They feel that the devil has more power than God has because he is doing miracles and God is not.

If we are to reach a lost world for Jesus we are going to have to rely on the miraculous intervention of God. We are going to have to lay hands on the sick and believe God to heal them. We are going to have to allow God to speak words through us to other people. Only God can reveal things that are in their lives that you and I know nothing about. We are going to have to trust God to make the miraculous work in our lives and in the lives of others so that they can cry out to us, "What must I do to be saved?"

Test Every Doctrine By The Word of God

Do not let the doctrines of men hinder your faith in God's Word. If what men say does not line up with what the Bible says. You

must reject men and lay hold to the Bible. It is the Word of God. Paul told the Christians in Rome:

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." (Rom. 3:3-4)

The Bible tells us to COVET and DESIRE the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1). Anyone who discourages you from doing other wise is teaching you something that is contrary to God's Word. God says that they are a liar. They may even be sincere, but they are a sincere liar.

Let God be true. Do not allow the unbelief of others make your faith ineffective. Believe God to do miracles, signs, and wonders. Ask for them. Pray for them. Expect them. Speak the Word of God concerning them and He will back up the Word of God that comes forth from your lips.

God's power did not cease in the earth after the apostolic age. It is still available to every Christian today who would but trust Him. God is good and in His goodness He is still doing the impossible.

Chapter Fourteen

Error Twelve: Whatever Happens In My Life Is God's Will For Me

We have been showing you the goodness of God by teaching the truth concerning certain errors that are prevalent in many Christian circles. These errors have made the God's goodness of no effect in the lives of many Christians. They have destroyed faith and have kept God's people from appropriating the blessings He has stored up for them.

In this lesson, we will look at one more error. The errors I have covered are probably not the only ones, but these are the ones I am familiar with.

The last error we will deal with is the fact that many people truly believe whatever happens in their life, whether it is negative or positive, is actually the will of God for them. Most of the time it is NEGATIVE things that happen to people such as accidents, failures, sickness, death, etc. that people claim to be God's will.

They blame this on the SOVEREIGNTY of God. When we speak of the sovereignty of God we are speaking of His absolute reign. He is the all powerful God and He rules and reigns the universe. This is all true and I believe in it whole heartedly. In fact, I am glad about it. I am glad Satan is not the sovereign of the universe.

Some have taken this to mean that whatever happens in their lives God ordained it because nothing can happen unless He ordains it. Even if it can be proven that it was Satan then they will say, "Satan cannot do anything without God's permission." So people have it set in their minds that whatever happens to them is God's will and that there is nothing that they can do about it.

It is true that we cannot prevent some things from happening; however, it is equally true that there are many things that we can prevent and most things can be changed. Though God is sovereign, He has given man the power of CHOICE. You and I can choose to have God's intervention in our life and we can choose not to have it.

There is nothing in the Bible that tells us that we MUST accept everything that comes our way. On the contrary, the Bible tells us that we can make changes and how we may go about doing it.

Prayer Changes Things

Many people will not pray because they feel that whatever has happened to them was God's doing and therefore it would be selfish to ask Him to remove it. If they do pray they ask God to "let His will be done" thinking that this is His will.

The story of Hezekiah paints for us a completely different picture. God let King Hezekiah know that his days were numbered:

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." (Isa. 38:1)

This was a word directly from the Lord. He told Hezekiah exactly what was going to happen to him. Most people hear this and they accept the verdict. They say, "It's the will of God." Yet, Hezekiah was not going to accept this saying as the final verdict, even if this did come from the prophet of God.

"Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord. And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." (Isa. 38:2-3)

Hezekiah knew something about the mercy of God. He knew that God would not reward his good service with evil. Hezekiah made an attempt to change what would seem like to most people is God's will and final verdict on the situation.

If a person receives a word from the Lord such as the one Hezekiah received, they would think it to be presumption to ask God to change it. "Well, I guess it's my appointed time to go" they will say. Yet, Hezekiah looked at things from a different perspective. He saw an opportunity to receive GRACE. The best part is - he got it:

"Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I HAVE HEARD THY PRAYER, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." (Isa. 38:4-5)

God HEARD Hezekiah's prayer. God only hears and answer prayer that is prayed in accordance with His will:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hears us, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of him." (1 John 5:14-15)

If it had truly been God's will for Hezekiah to die, all of the praying and crying in the world could not have changed that. Obviously, it was not God's will for Hezekiah to die. It was His will for Him to live. Yet, regardless of this, Hezekiah would have died if he had not done one simple thing - PRAY!

Many times God will tell us things that are about to come to pass in our lives. He warns us of these things to give us time to prepare and do something about them. God told Hezekiah what was going to happen so that Hezekiah could have knowledge. Then Hezekiah could ASK for God's intervention and God could change the situation. You do not receive from God unless you first ask (Matt. 7:7-11; James 4:2).

Many people are getting sick and dying apart from God's will and yet there is nothing God can do about it. It is by an act of their own will that they have accepted the verdict.

God will provide us information concerning His will but He will not force us to accept it. He will only do for us what WE allow Him to do in our lives. He is too much of a gentleman to force anything on us.

This is why interceding and witnessing to the lost is so important. It is the will of God for every lost soul to receive salvation (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Yet, people are dying and going to hell every day. Why is this? It is due to a lack of intercession and witnessing.

Many Christians who sit around waiting for God to do something will have some unpleasant surprises when they go before the judgment seat of Christ. They will find that they could and should have done something about their situation and situation of others by simply praying and spreading the Word.

Faith Changes Things

Let's look at a familiar incident in the life of Jesus:

"And a certain woman with an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." (Mark 5:25-26)

This woman had spent all her money on doctors and she only got WORSE. Now most people would have given up. They would have figured, "Well, I've done all that I could do. I guess it's not God's will for me to be healed."

Yet this woman refused to accept such a verdict. Instead, when she had HEARD of Jesus she went and touched His garment. The power of God flowed out of Him and into her and she was completely healed. Although the crowd following Jesus was pressing Him, He recognized that someone had touched Him in faith. He called her over and made this statement to her:

"And he said unto her, THY FAITH hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." (Mark 5:34)

The power of God was available to everyone that was near Jesus. Yet only one touched Him in faith and it was the woman. Yet, the Jesus did not say that it was the power that made her whole. He said that it was her FAITH that did it. Faith is the switch that turns on the power of God.

The woman could have accepted her failures as the will of God for her life. She could have said like most, "Whatever will be will be because it's God's will for me." Yet she did not. She acted on her faith and changed her situation.

Faith comes from hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). God's Word reveals His will. This woman heard something, made her confession in accordance with it (Mark 5:28), and then she acted on it. It changed her life. However, even though it was God's will to heal her, she would not have received her health had she not acted in faith.

Most people allow things to happen in their lives because they do not TRULY know the will of God. Faith goes no further than the revealed will of God. Acting on faith can change your situation. Study God's promises and find out His will for you.

Exercising Our Authority Changes Things

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus reveals Himself as the sovereign One of both heaven and earth:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth."

Jesus reigns and not Satan, praise the Lord! So why is it that Satan can seem to have his way in our lives anytime he desires. Is it because God gave him permission? No, it's because WE gave him permission.

Although Jesus has ALL of the authority, He delegated it to us, the church (Luke 10:17-20). He expects the church to rule and reign with Him NOW and not just during the millennium (Rom. 5:17; Eph. 1:16-23; 2:1-6). God tells YOU to do something about the devil:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

Too many people are praying and asking God to do something about the devil. When He does not then they assume that He is using the devil to try them as they ASSUME He did with Job. We have already seen in a previous lesson that God does not use evil to accomplish His purposes. Satan is the persona of evil so therefore God does not use him.

Jesus has delegated His authority to you and expects you to use it. The devil will have a wonderful time with you until you make up your mind that YOU will do something about him and stop waiting for God to do it. Jesus taught us how to use this authority:

"For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." (Mark 11:23)

I have no problems believing that Jesus was speaking of a physical mountain. If it becomes necessary for us to move one we have the authority to do it. However, Jesus was also using an illustration of the problems and obstacles that we face. They can become "mountains" to us.

Christians are constantly asking and begging God to move obstacles that are in their way. When these obstacles are not moved then they assume that it's the will of God for them to be there.

Yet God told YOU to speak to the mountain. He has delegated the authority to you. It's up to you to exercise that authority in dealing

with Satan and the attacks he brings your way. Satan's greatest trick is to make you assume that what he is doing is the will of God for you.

Do not receive it. Rebuke him. Command the circumstances and problems to leave in the Name of Jesus and God will back you.

Let's look at one more example in this area. In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus told His disciples to pass on to the other side. So they got in a ship. Jesus got on the ship, grabbed himself a pillow, and went to sleep. All of a sudden, a storm arose and was beating on the ship. The scared disciples woke up the resting Jesus and said, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus awoke and dealt with the situation:

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:39-40)

Jesus did not get up and say, "God is in control. He will take care of this problem." No, Jesus dealt with the problem. If the storms were God's will then Jesus was fighting against the will of God, and we know that He would never do that.

It amazes me that people will claim that God put sickness on them and yet, they will go to the doctors to fight against what they believe is the will of God for their lives. That is dumb. The truth is that they really don't believe that. They only heard it in church.

Like Jesus, we must deal with the storms that come into our lives. We must not accept them as the will of God but we must deal with them. Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. He expected THEM to deal with the situation. Instead, they became afraid and called out to Him. They were like a lot of us today, we scream and ask God to do something when He has already made the means necessary for us to deal with the problems.

Learn to exercise your delegated authority and CHANGE the situations. Do not accept negative circumstances as God's will for your life.

Repentance Changes Things

God usually gets the blame for everything good and bad. Every so often the devil might get blamed for something. However, many negative things that come into our lives are a result of our own doing:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7)

Because of the law of sowing and reaping, we are responsible for the good or the evil that comes into our lives. It is not the will of God for us to receive evil. But because of this law we will reap it if we sow it.

Yet, God has made a provision for this. If we repent of the evil that we have done then we can change the situation. An example of this is found in James:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed." (James 5:14-16a)

When we sin, it can cause problems in our health, finances, relationships, and many other areas. It is not the will of God that we sin, therefore, neither is it His desire that we reap the results of our sins.

However, if we are experiencing difficulty in any area, we need to confess and forsake that sin. God promises that when we do this we will have mercy (Prov. 28:13). When the prodigal son returned to his father, everything was restored to him (Luke 15:11-32). Our heavenly Father will do the same when we repent.

If we have sinned and gotten out of the will of God then we must repent. Repentance automatically puts us back into God's will. When we are back in His will we receive the results of being in His will.

If you are in sin, don't just accept your situation. Repent to God and any other person that you have to and by doing this you can change your situation.

Notes

Preface

1. Gaddy, C. Welton **Why Bother With The Bible? Understanding the Book of Faith**, © 1998 Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, pp. 12, 13

Chapter Two:

1. We are thankful that a number of scholars are affirming this and bringing necessary critique upon our “spiritual only” view of the Scriptures. Many have noted that a true biblical understanding of salvation is not limited to deliverance from hell but includes deliverance from all of life’s negatives that we are confronted with.

Chapter Three

1. Bounds, Edwards M. **The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer**, Copyright © 1990 by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287, p. 26

2. Worrell, A.S. **The Worrell New Testament** (Springfield, MS: Gospel Publishing House, 1980), p. 68

Chapter Four

1. Rice, John R. **Prayer: Asking and Receiving** (Murfreesborg, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1942), pp. 131, 132

2. Thayer's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, E-Sword Edition

Chapter Five

1. Simpson, A.B. **The Life Of Prayer**, Copyright (C) 1989 by Christian Publications, 3825 Hartzdale Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011. All rights preserved.

2. Source of this quote is unknown

3. Torrey, Reuben A. **The Power of Prayer**, Copyright © 1924 by Fleming H. Revell Company, Grand Rapids, MI 49530, p. 116.

4. Dakes, Finis Jennings **Bible Truths Unmasked**, Copyright © 1977
Dakes Bible Sales, Lawrenceville, GA 30246, p. 81

Chapter Six

1. Spurgeon, Charles H. **The Power of Prayer In A Believer's Life**, Copyright © 1993 by Lance C. Wubbels. Published by Emerald Books. P. 53
2. Strong, James. **The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible**, Copyright (C) 1984 by Thomas Nelson Publisher's.
3. Bounds, E.M. **The Possibilities of Prayer**, Available from Holiness Data Ministry, Spokane, Washington

Chapter Seven

1. Simpson, A.B. **The Life Of Prayer**, Copyright (C) 1989 by Christian Publications, 3825 Hartzdale Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011. All rights preserved.

Chapter Nine

1. Bounds, Edwards M. **The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer**, Copyright © 1990 by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287, p. 231

Chapter Ten

1. Strong, James. **The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible**, Copyright (C) 1984 by Thomas Nelson Publisher's.
2. Ibid

Chapter Eleven

1. Pink, Arthur W. **A Study of Dispensationalism** (<http://www.pbministries.org>), Chapter 1
2. According to **Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary**, Calvinism is "The theological system of [John] Calvin and his

followers marked by strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God and especially by the doctrine of predestination.”

3. Pink, *Dispensationalism*, Chapter 2

Chapter Twelve

1. Bright, John **The Authority of the Old Testament**, Copyright © 1975 by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI., p. 60

2. Ibid., p. 74

3. Wilson, Marvin R. **Our Father Abraham**, as quoted from a document on the internet found at

<http://www.messianicmoments.com/Torah/frameofref/marcion.html>

Chapter Thirteen

1. For outstanding and historical proof that miracles of healing and deliverance continued long after the canon was complete, see A.J. Gordon's book, **The Ministry of Healing**. This book is available in an abridged set of books titled **Healing: The Three Great Classics on Divine Healing**, by **Christian Publications**, 3825 Hartzdale Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011. All rights preserved.

Invitation and prayer for salvation

To become a TRUE Christian One must be born again -1. John 3:1-7

We must be born of the water and the Spirit. This water is not speaking of water baptism but of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; 1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 5:25-27).

There is only ONE avenue into heaven and that is to be born again. Water baptism, church membership, religious duties, giving to the poor, living a moral life, taking the Lord's supper, being a member of a denomination, or an INTELLECTUAL reception (vs. a heart reception) of Jesus Christ cannot save you. You must be born again.

Are you born again? If you are not you will not spend eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ but instead you will enter into eternal damnation. I urge you to consider accepting Jesus Christ as your savior.

To be born again is very simple. You need only accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Why not give your heart to Him today. All you need to do is ask Him to come into your life. If you are not sure of how to do this here is a simple prayer to pray:

Lord Jesus

I ask you to come into my heart right now. You said in your word that if I confess you with my mouth and believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead then I will be saved (Rom. 10:9). I recognize that I am a sinner and I need your forgiveness and a change in my nature. I repent of all my sin. I know that all that come to you, you will not reject (John 6:37). Thank you for your dying for me so that I can be born again. Thank you Father for Jesus. Thank you Holy Spirit for coming in to my life. AMEN.

You are now born again. It's that simple.

By the way, welcome to the family!

Invitation to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit

What Is This Baptism? He is a Gift to be given to the believer - Acts 2:38. Every born again Christian has the Holy Spirit in them but not every Christian has received the BAPTISM (immersion) with the Spirit.

He is also a PROMISE that can be claimed - Acts 1:4 A promise implies something that one has a legal right to claim. You need not beg, plead, and do things to earn this blessing. He is a gift so it's free. He is a promise that is claimed by faith. He can be received AFTER one is born again - Acts 19:1-6.

Though it is better to ask God for this baptism in your own way, below is a prayer that may help you if you are at a loss as to how to ask:

Heavenly Father

The Lord Jesus promised that I can receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with other tongues. You promised that if I ask then I would receive exactly that which I have asked you for. Father I thank you in the name of your son Jesus and I yield myself to you Holy Spirit. Thank you for baptising me with Your Spirit.

Now just lift your hands and receive. Don't forget to share this blessing with others.