

SELAH

By

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Dear Saints in Christ Jesus,

These notes were taken from our Old Testament and New Testament Bible surveys at Koinonia on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. The intention was to give an overview of the entire Bible and see how the two testaments “connect.” Within the notes, practical truths were brought out because we know that the study of Scripture without application is like a vehicle without gas...going nowhere.

If the Holy Spirit can use these simply truths to draw you closer to Jesus Christ and develop a more mature love of God the Father, then this booklet will have accomplished its task.

May the blessing of God be shed upon you as you receive, with meekness, His engrafted Word.

Selah,

Pastor Ray

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DAY 1

TRUE LOVE

The Song of Solomon is one of the books of the Bible that is often overlooked. Its pointed love theme nearly causes one to blush. Sadly, it may sound like “the way it used to be” with us. This, like all other Scripture, is God inspired for the same reasons any other book is written.¹ Let’s take a look at this book and see what “pearls” of encouragement we can find to help us in our walk with the Lord.

Undoubtedly, this epistle is a good one for Christian couples to read at least once a month. It’s a tragedy to see how people are deceived and destroyed by the television soap opera exploits about relationships, when our loving God and Creator has designed “a more excellent way.”² God is love.³ He designed love, and in this book He reveals some keys to keeping the flame burning.

On a practical note, no matter how long you have been married, the attitudes shared in the Song of Solomon should be the same for every couple. This is not merely for young couples. Note the tenderness, respect, longing for one another. And unless I’ve missed it, I don’t see any faults mentioned at all. They accepted each other as the Creator made them.

You also, as a Christian, are accepted in the Beloved.⁴ You are not a piece of junk or hazardous waste. You are the Beloved’s, and He is yours.⁵ You are Jesus’ dove, His undefiled one,⁶ a chaste virgin⁷ not to be polluted by the “one night stand heroes” of Hollywood.

Christian! Male or female! If this book finds you thinking about anyone other than, spiritually, Jesus Christ or practically, your mate, I – as the old song goes – see “a bad moon rising” and troubled waters ahead.

Of course, we have no true love to give, in the Biblical sense, if we are not sensing or personally experiencing the love of Jesus Christ. His love never fails,⁸ and excels over every pleasure.⁹ That’s where it all begins, in the inner chambers fellowshiping with the Lord through His word. This week, go through “The Song” and listen to Jesus talking to you. He means every word He says. He put His life behind it.¹⁰ If a spark is gone practically, it flickered out vertically first.¹¹

Come back home, Beloved.¹²

1-2 Tim 3:16,17; 2-1 Cor 12:31; 3-1 John 4:8; 4-Eph 1:6; 5-Song of Solomon 6:3; 6-Song 6:9; 7-2 Cor 11:2; 8-1 Cor 13:8; 9-Song 1:2; 10-John 15:13; 11-Rev 2:4,5; 12-Song 2:14.

DAY 2

A LESSON FROM MRS. GADABOUT

In Phillip Keller's classic book, "A Shepherd Looks a Psalm 23", he writes about one of his prize sheep which he called "Mrs. Gadabout". She was beautiful on the outside but inwardly there was a disposition that began to adversely affect the rest of the flock. Not content with her shepherd's provision, she "took matters into her own hands" and dug a hole into another field where the proverbial grass was greener. Not secure in her master's personal care and love, the wanderlust set in. "Discontentment and mismanagement" was on the front page of "The Shepherd's Union", the daily newspaper of that field. In due time, other sheep followed her example of discontent and crossed the line of trust and faith into the field of delusion and destruction. Keller's excellent analysis all too often reflects the attitude of some of God's sheep.

Mrs. Gadabout was a complainer. Her attitude of complaint spread. How does God view a complaining disposition? Check it out.¹ Complaining doesn't help anyone; in fact, it overwhelms the complainer.² When David wrote the 144th Psalm, he pleaded with God to rid him from strange children³ who, among other things, were publicly spreading complaints.⁴

It's so easy for our flesh to launch out attacks upon others for our seeming misfortunes, when often it's our Shepherd's personal correction we're experiencing.⁵ This grumbling disposition is certainly an end-times phenomena.⁶ Brother Job said literally, "I am complaining about God, not man."⁷

If you today find yourself being critical, judgmental, bitter, or discontented, take it to the Lord in prayer like David did.⁸ If you don't deal with it on your knees, you'll take it out on others. Then you may find it very difficult to pick from the tree that you've planted.⁹

Israel's complaining ruined an entire generation. An entire church can as easily be leveled if Mr. or Mrs. Gadabout go unchecked. We all experience trials in life; disappointment is inevitable. When our expectation is from God,¹⁰ however, we free ourselves from a curse.¹¹

When you feel let down, look up! Lashing out is never right. It's only a sober revelation of the "treasure" in our heart.¹²

Oh – Mrs. Gadabout? Keller had to kill her because her attitude was killing others.¹³

1-Num 11:1; 2-Psalm 77:3; 3-Psalm 144:11; 4-Psalm 144:14;
5-Lam 3:39; Prov 3:11,12; 6-Jude 14-16; 7-Job 21:4 (Living Bible);
8-Psalm 142:1,2; 9-Gal 6:7,8; 10-Psalm 62:5; 11-Jer 17:5,6;
12-Matt 12:34-37; 13-James 3:6.

DAY 3

DIVINE ELECTION

David said: “Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”¹ That is my feeling regarding election. I do not believe that my heavenly Father requires me to endorse either the Calvin or Armenian camp of thought. (God is neither a Calvinist nor an Armenian, though some would have you think so!)

In the gospels, the disciples drop their nets to follow Jesus,² afterwards they are told that they were chosen by Him.³ Well, did He choose them or did they choose Him? Logic demands an either/or response while Scripture, in very plain speech, declares both to be true. If you look up the word election in the Strong’s Concordance (#1588, 1589) in the New Testament Greek with all of its root derivatives, you find that election also means selection.

For example, in 1 Thess. the brethren’s fruit⁴ was a direct result of their election (selection!) of God.⁵ In Romans, however, election has nothing to do with human involvement or works at all.⁶ If grace is irresistible, then what’s happening in Acts 7:51?

If mankind is universally depraved (which we are) and all of us have gone astray (which we have), then the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all.⁷ The “all” of this verse means all in both ways – the totality of iniquity of the entire human race throughout all of time. This even includes someone who is a false teacher and denies the Lord who bought him.⁸ (Check out the word “bought” in this verse.⁹)

I see nothing but separation among brothers and sisters who insist on sweeping under the carpet or explaining away clear passages of Scripture on either end of the doctrine of election. I do not need to understand nor reconcile the issues. I do need to bend the knee to the Word of God and believe what it states.

Our faith accepts things we do not understand. Explain eternity? Explain God? Certain things are incomprehensible and inexpressible. Certain things are “divine secrets”¹⁰ because of our present “tinted glass” condition.¹¹

Is God absolutely sovereign?¹² Yes. Is man accountable for his choices?¹³ Yes. If man can’t choose, why propose the choices?¹⁴ Why question the fact that God chooses?¹⁵

All Scripture is inspired by God, even when it doesn't add up in my mind. Can you understand John 3:16-18? Do you realize that you are, by reason of your human birth, not in good standing with God?¹⁶

Have you heard the good news?¹⁷ God chose to do something about your sin problem.¹⁸ Now the choice is up to you.

Church, stop the biting¹⁹ and do some inviting.²⁰ It's nearly dinner time.²¹

1-Psalm 131:1; 2-Matt 4:19,20; 3-John 15:16; 4-1 Thess 1:3;
5-1 Thess 1:4; 6-Rom 9:9-12; 7-Isaiah 53:6; 8-2 Peter 2:1;
9-1 Cor 6:20; 10-Deut 29:29; 11-1 Cor 13:12; 12-Rev 19:6;
13-Gal 6:7,8; 14-Deut 30:19, Joshua 24:15; 15-Num 16:7, Deut 7:7,
Neh 9:7; 16-Rom 3:10,23; 17-1 Cor 15:1-4, Rom 10:5-13; 18-Isaiah 53,
John 1:29; 19-Gal 5:15; 20-Matt 11:28-30; 21-Luke 14:15-24.

DAY 4

LIGHT ... SENT TO RULE

The book of Genesis unlocks many of God's great doctrinal and practical truths. Note that His first act of creation was light.¹ Isn't that interesting? To have life, light is required.² Paul, formerly Saul, was a very religious person but he didn't have life in the Biblical sense until he "saw the Light".³ Also in the first chapter of Genesis, we find God establishing the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night.⁴ Do not miss the fact that light is given by God to rule or govern over the earth. Is it surprising to read that Scripture is light,⁵ given by God Himself,⁶ and sent to guide us and show us how to live?⁷

Yes, this present worlds is full of darkness and lies but we, as God's people, can have light even in the midst of "Egypt".^{8,9} The love of and for darkness prevents people from coming to the light.¹⁰ May our Lord help us, individually and as a local body, walk in His light and intimate fellowship.¹¹ The fruit of our personal worship of Christ will be a "light show"¹² for all the world to see.

The church is God's candlestick in the world today.¹³ Just like the candlestick in the earthly sanctuary required oil to burn,¹⁴ we too need God's holy oil, symbolizing our need for His anointing¹⁵ and gladness.¹⁶

Does God's light govern your lifestyle? Does grace license darkness? Before the Passover meal, children in Jewish homes search for leaven (a symbol of sin) with a light of some sort. Any leaven found is then burned, symbolizing judgment on sin. Although we are completely forgiven through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ,¹⁷ His light continues to shine on us to purify unto Himself a holy and pure church.¹⁸ It's still Passover in a sense.¹⁹

Lord Jesus, in Your mercy, shine Your light of grace, mercy and truth upon us that we may reflect You in our lives.

1-Gen 1:3; 2-John 1:4-9; 3-Acts 9:3; 4-Gen 1:16; 5-Psalm 119:105;
6-2 Tim 3:16,17; 7-Psalm 119:130; 8-Exodus 10:21-23; 9-Phil 2:15;
10-John 3:19-21; 11-1 John 1:7; 12-Matt 5:16; 13-Rev 1:20;
14-Exodus 35:8,28; 15-Psalm 23:5; 16-Psalm 45:7; 17-1 Cor 15:1-4,
Col 2:10; 18-Eph 5:27; 19-1 Cor 5:7,8.

DAY 5

THE “WAITING GAME”

One of the most difficult words of Scripture for me to apply is the word “wait”. So often I want to jump right in and do something – anything! After all, I’ve given God “x” amount of time to do something, and nothing has happened.

Many passages reveal the waiting nature of our walk. For some, it’s a wait for God’s call in ministry.¹ Some of you today are waiting for a fresh touch from the Holy Spirit.² Certainly, in light of our world’s condition, we are waiting for Jesus to return from heaven.³ Our flesh can’t stand waiting on God or for God. We are too “time” oriented.

Scripture simply speaks to us the word of God: “Wait on the Lord and keep His way.”⁴ Could it be that “Abba” is telling us to do our part, trust Him, and He’ll do His? I think so.

As Spurgeon wrote, faith cures fretting. When our hearts are secure in Christ’s love for us, we will be “trustingly patient” when the hourglass is running out. Wait instead of run. Wait instead of panic. Wait and be of good courage.⁵ Wait and commune with the God of your salvation.⁶ Don’t run yourself to pieces. Don’t be worrying instead of trusting.

How long do I wait, God? All day.⁷ May you exhausted, battle-weary saints “breathe in” the truth found in Psalm 123:2. Heavenly help is “on call”.⁸ Our Lord is watching His sheep, checking His pasture. It’s safe; and it is well with my soul.⁹

Funny thing – when I’m still¹⁰ and waiting for the Lord, I’m fine. It’s when I’m “playing God”, trying to force Providence, that I find my peace leaves. Is your heart troubled about something, or someone? Then it is waiting on, or for, the wrong thing. Wait on what? The economy? The doctor’s report? The children’s report card? Your IRS return? Better weather? No!!!

Wait on the Lord! Look for Him in every situation and circumstance. You’ll be glad you did!¹¹

1-Rom 12:7; 2-Acts 1:4; 3-1 Thess 1:10; 4-Psalm 37:34; 5-Psalm 27:14; 6-Micah 7:7; 7-Psalm 25:5; 8-Psalm 120:1, 121:2; 9-Psalm 23:1-3; 10-Psalm 46:10; 11-Isaiah 40:31.

DAY 6

DIVINE DARKNESS

As children of God, we experience a number of things, don't we? The joys of answered prayer, the wonder of salvation through Jesus Christ, and, of course, God's unmatched "benefits program".¹

However, the sun doesn't always shine. We have rainy days, cloudy and gloomy days, and, in the beloved northeastern part of the U.S.A., snowy days. Those days so typify the seasons of our life when we are at our proverbial lowest. Nothing seems to be flowing; everything is a struggle. You read your Bible, stay in fellowship, pray, cry – cry some more. Zero!

Is all lost? Has my Shepherd forsaken me? Fear not, little lamb!² It's all a part of your story. The prophet Micah experienced the same stuff. The nation was in upheaval, and friends couldn't be trusted.³ Families were at odds.⁴ How could all this be happening to the apple of God's eye?⁵ Micah had nowhere to look but up.

Hallelujah! There is a refuge!⁶ There is a hiding place!⁷ The sun does shine behind the clouds. What did Micah do that you and I can do during those hard times? One thing – he both looked to the Lord and waited upon the God of his salvation.⁸ He talked to God; he served Him, feelings or not, knowing that God heard him (and saw him, I might add).

Micah also was a realist. He knew that he would fall. He realized that he was subject to failure, missing the mark. He knew his limitations. He also experienced times of sitting in darkness which, figuratively speaking, speaks about seasons of uncertainty, misery, sorrow. We all have been there at one time or another, haven't we?

Note that Micah's revelation is that the Lord shall be a light unto me. A light for direction, a light for comfort. Jesus is that Light,⁹ clouds or no clouds. He is actively, presently, sovereignly upon the throne¹⁰ interceding on your behalf¹¹ and moving that Shepherd's crook providentially.¹² Faith reads the hand of Providence and declares, "Good".¹³

Tough season? Uncertainty? May "seeing" God's face make you aware of His presence today.¹⁴ Better weather is right behind the clouds.

1-Psalm 68:19; 2-Isaiah 41:10,13; 3-Micah 2:1,2; 4-Micah 7:5,6;
5-Zech 2:8; 6-Psalm 46:1; 7-Psalm 32:7, 119:114; 8-Micah 7:7;
9-John 8:12; 10-Heb 12:2; 11-Heb 7:25; 12-Psalm 23:4; 13-Rom 8:28;
14-Num 6:24-27.

DAY 7

FOR FAILURES ONLY

Have you ever failed in a relationship? Have you ever experienced the personal loss of peace or of joy? Who hasn't, to some degree, failed God? I don't think a single person reading this can say, "I haven't; not me." What then do we do with those thoughts of guilt, failure, or incompetence? Does our falling short of perfection remove us from God and disqualify us from serving Jesus? No! The devil would want us to believe that, however.

Let me ask you – how many times in the gospels did the apostles ask the wrong questions,¹ reveal the wrong attitude,² fail in the ministry,³ sleep on the job,⁴ and even out-and-out deny the Lord?⁵ God's response? Restoration and fellowship, with the net result being a freshly-anointed, heart-changed servant, rejoicing in God's marvelous grace and love.⁶

Fellow saint, Jesus Christ is the great restorer of souls. He restored David's joy following his sins of adultery and murder.⁷ He promised backslidden Israel that, following their repentance, He would restore to them the years that the locust had eaten, as well as the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm.⁸ All are symbolic of "insect-like" sins and attitudes that creep into our lives and rob us of the sense of God's presence.

Another beautiful type of restoration is found in the book of Ruth, where Ruth (symbolic of the Church) is redeemed by Boaz (type of Christ), who is identified as her kinsman-redeemer.⁹ Our Lord is indeed "The Restorer of paths to dwell in."¹⁰ In other words, God is a God of new beginnings.

The ministry spoken about in Galatians 6:1 is a ministry of restoration. The Greek language used describes, medically, the setting of a broken limb and, practically, the mending of a torn net – depicting both wholeness and usefulness.

David, mentioned earlier, wrote about our Shepherd-God who restores our souls;¹¹ and Isaiah recorded the Lord's promise to restore our comforts.¹² God also restores withered hands¹³ and blinded eyes.¹⁴ Oh, that we might meditate on the restorative nature of Jesus Christ!

Are you falling apart? Is your world collapsing? Have you "let God down"? Return to Him. Do it now, whether you are a prodigal son or daughter.¹⁵ Let the Lord bring restoration to you today.

1-John 14:5; 2-Luke 9:54; 3-Mark 9:17,18; 4-Mark 14:37;
5-Mark 14:66-72; 6-Luke 24:32-36,52,53; 7-Psalm 51:7-17; 8-Joel 2:25;
9-Ruth 2:20; 10-Isaiah 58:12; 11-Psalm 23:3; 12-Isaiah 57:18;
13-Mark 3:5; 14-Mark 8:25; 15-Luke 15:11-24.

DAY 8

WILL THE REAL MESSIAH PLEASE STAND UP?

The Holy Scriptures (no other literature) reveal to mankind just who the true Messiah, the Christ, is.

Our hearts were crushed by the death of men, women, and children who followed “Christ Koresh” in Waco, Texas. Some woman in the Ukraine has claimed to be Christ. Only God Himself knows how many gurus in India say they are the Messiah. Today, New Agers take courses on how to become a christ. (Can you imagine Jesus taking those classes?) I am going to give you a partial Biblical check-list of prophesy about the True Christ. Remember, if anyone claims to be The Christ of the Holy Bible but doesn’t meet these requirements, he or she is a fraud.

1. Seed of the woman that would bruise Satan’s head (Gen 3:15)
2. Seed of Abraham (Gen 12:3)
3. Seed of Isaac and Jacob (Gen 17:19)
4. Star out of Jacob (Num 24:17,19)
5. Tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10)
6. Descendant of David (2 Sam 7:12,13; Jer 23:5)
7. David’s Lord (Psalm 110:1)
8. Have eternal existence (Micah 5:2; John 1:1)
9. The Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Prov 30:4)
10. God the Son (Heb 1:8)
11. Totally God and totally man (Phil 2:5-8; Isaiah 9:6)
12. Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
13. Have to come at a set time (any after 70 A.D. disqualified) (Dan 9:24-26)
14. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
15. A prophet like Moses (non-Jews disqualified) (Deut 18:15,18)
16. Suffer crucifixion (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22)
17. Enter Jerusalem upon a donkey (Zech 9:9)
18. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12,13)
19. Rise from the dead (Isaiah 53:9,10; Matt 28; Mark 13; etc.)

Though far from a complete list, I’m certain that if you are completely honest with yourself, and completely convinced that the Bible alone is God’s word, the only Person who fulfills these prophecies is Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Only He can atone for your sin¹ and give you a new life.² Eternal life is found in a relationship with the True and Living God³ who will be with you always.⁴ Call upon His name, and don’t accept any substitute.⁵

1-Matt 1:21, John 1:29; 2-2 Cor 5:17; 3-John 17:3, Matt 28:19,20;
4-Heb 13:5b; 5-Rom 10:6-13, John 1:10-14.

DAY 9

THAT ALL ELUSIVE PEACE

There is a three-fold type of peace that is revealed in the Word of God. First, there is peace with God, which is our eternal position.¹ Then, there is the peace of God that is practical, or day-to-day.² Lastly, there is the God of Peace Himself, which is personal.³

We must keep our thoughts riveted to God's Word. The Bible is God's dictionary, thesaurus, etc. Jesus does not promise us peace as the world gives,⁴ i.e., the absence of difficulty, trouble, or pain (which is temporary, if at all). No! Peace, says the Lord, is found in Me.⁵

The person outside of Christ or disobedient to Christ can never experience the peace of Christ. To the person who is lost, turning to Jesus and Him alone for forgiveness of sins is salvation, resulting in positional peace with God as stated above. To the "prodigal saint" who returns to Christ, the practical, day-to-day peace of God returns. This peace comes from above⁶ for those who diligently seek it.⁷ To be spiritually minded is linked to peace,⁸ which is also a key element of the kingdom of God.⁹ Paul tells us that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.¹⁰

Again, the peace we write of is not the result of perfect relationships, perfect health, perfect families, perfect churches. No! No! The peace that God gives us is in spite of imperfection because it's based upon a Person, that person being the Prince of Peace,¹¹ the King of Peace.¹²

Therefore, the way of peace can not be known¹³ apart from a vital, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. " 'There is no peace,' says the Lord, 'for the wicked.' "¹⁴ So, child of God, be it a fiery furnace¹⁵ or a den of lions,¹⁶ our God promises us peace.

We tend to use the word peaceful a lot, don't we? Usually we're referring to a time of quiet, solitude, rest, etc. Did you know that the word peaceful in that context is not found in the Scriptures at all? And yet it's that type of peace that we so often seek after.

He, Jesus, is our peace.¹⁷ As we row through our personal storms, it may seem like He's asleep somewhere, disinterested, uncaring. That would make the words found in Hebrews 13:5b a lie, wouldn't it? No, for of course, God doesn't lie.¹⁸ We have a tendency to look for peace in the wrong places or in the wrong ways.

Coming to the Lord, walking with the Lord, trusting in the Lord assures us of peace – storms and all! "Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way."¹⁹

1-Rom 5:1; 2-Phil 4:6,7; 3-Phil 4:9; 4-John 14:27; 5-John 16:33;
6-Jam 3:17; 7-1 Peter 3:11; 8-Rom 8:6; 9-Rom 14:17; 10-1 Cor 14:33;
11-Isaiah 9:6; 12-Heb 7:2; 13-Rom 3:17; 14-Isaiah 48:22, 57:21;
15-Dan 3; 16-Dan 6; 17-Eph 2:14; 18-Num 23:19; 19-2 Thess 3:16.

DAY 10

FAITH THAT WORKS

For faith to be effective, faith must be active. Faith, in the verb sense, is a demonstration of our belief system. Saving faith will birth works of faith. That was one of the things that Paul noticed about the Thessalonians.¹ Do you recall how Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the incident of the man sick of the palsy who was brought to Jesus by his four friends?² The Word says that Jesus saw their faith. He saw them putting legs on their belief system. These four men didn't merely acknowledge that Jesus could help their friend; they put their faith and trust in Jesus into action.

What was it that enabled Abel to offer an acceptable sacrifice?³ Noah to build the ark?⁴ Abraham to offer up Isaac?⁵ Faith. You and I must learn how to “walk by faith, not by sight”,⁶ because without faith it is impossible (not just highly unlikely) to please God.⁷

It's so easy to be moved by what we see, to walk by sight. The ten spies certainly did more harm than good by bringing back a “realistic” account of Canaan. They were, in the natural, right – dead right! Joshua and Caleb were “foolish” enough to believe God meant what He said in spite of the opposition.⁸ What does all of this have to do with me? Everything.

God's Word is full of promises for both the practical and the spiritual, for the temporal as well as the eternal. However, only when our hearts are fully assured of that truth⁹ will we ever grasp the peace, joy, and confidence God desires us to have despite any obstacles.¹⁰ For faith to grow, faith must be exercised. Circumstances, doubt, and so on will work to get us on a spiritual detour, and no doubt will if we waver with regards to God's Word and put Him into a “time box”. Faith is basically a heart belief that God is, if I may say it this way, “a Man of His Word”.

What area are you struggling with today? Marital? Financial? Health? Emotional? When Hagar was fleeing from Sarah and heading toward Egypt, the Lord met her. Genesis 16:14 records that she named the well where that meeting took place “Beer-Lahai-Roi”, or “the well of Him that lives and sees me”. He lives. He sees you. Feed faith, not fear. How? By sitting at His feet and hearing His Word.¹¹ And let His Word direct your words, your thoughts, and your actions.

1-1 Thess 1:3; 2-Matt 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26; 3-Heb 11:4; 4-Heb 11:7; 5-Heb 11:17, Gen 22:1-14; 6-2 Cor 5:7; 7-Heb 11:6; 8-Num 13:26-14:9; 9-1 Thess 2:13, 1 Thess 1:6; 10-2 Peter 1:1-4; 11-Luke 10:39, Rom 10:17.

DAY 11

WHO'S ON TRIAL?

The psalmist tells us that until the time that His word came to pass, “the word of the Lord tried him” (speaking of Joseph).¹ Has God given you a personal word of comfort, or a vision, or promise? If so, you can be certain that from the inception of that word until its actual fruition, there will be a period of testing or trial. Human nature tends to put God on trial if He doesn't microwave the answer to our prayer or FedEx the fulfillment of our vision.

Faith does not require visible, tangible evidence. Faith itself, that is faith in God, is substance and evidence.² In order for our faith to grow, our faith must be tried. It's much like a weight lifter who increases his lifting capacity by adding weight, not subtracting it. Peter tells us flat out that seasons of heaviness³ are “weights” added to remove the impurities and purify our natural abilities so that our faith⁴ will be stronger in the Lord.

A fiery trial is not uncommon for the child of God.⁵ We must be careful during those times that God has us in His refiner that we do not challenge His justice.⁶ All of His ways are righteous.⁷ We may not feel it or think it to be that way, but the fact is that it is that way. Nothing but good is going to come out of the situation you're in today.⁸ Even those evil things that are troubling you today will be stamped “good” in the final analysis.⁹ Don't put God on trial with your limited understanding.¹⁰

Continue in His refreshing Word.¹¹ Continue in His love¹² that He proved by dying on the cross. Continue experiencing His powerful, sustaining grace.¹³ Lay hold to the truth that God is truly good¹⁴ and His goodness is somehow, somewhere to be found in all of this “time in court”. Let's never forget that this world is not our home,¹⁵ and that the “final chapter” finds saints singing with joy who were at one time beheaded for their faith.¹⁶ These saints exemplify unquestioning trust¹⁷ and immovable perspective!¹⁸

In the “court room” of life it's comforting to know that “not guilty” is the final verdict for me,¹⁹ and that the reason for the temporal “hearing” is because of another fact that I know all too well – I'm not yet perfect.

What a wonderful attorney I have in Jesus!²⁰

1-Psalm 105:19; 2-Heb 11:1; 3-1 Peter 1:6; 4-1 Peter 1:7;
5-1 Peter 4:12; 6-Job 40:2,8, Rev 16:7; 7-Psalm 145:17; 8-Rom 8:28;
9-Gen 50:20; 10-Job 42:3; 11-John 8:31; 12-John 15:9; 13-2 Cor 12:9;
14-Psalm 73:1; 15-Phil 3:20; 16-Rev 15:2-4; 17-Job 13:15a;
18-Psalm 16:8; 19-Col 1:22, Rom 8:1; 20-1 John 2:1b.

DAY 12

HUNGRY SAINTS

The Bible is so complete. We are a three-part being¹ and in every one of those areas there exists an appetite of some sort. Spirit, soul and body all need to be nourished. Man's greatest need is salvation, which of course is spiritual. Jesus said that among the "blessed ones" are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.² Luke tells us that it's that hunger that God fills with good things.³

Although some preach that as a "King's kid" you will never go without, Scripture says just the opposite. God has reason for allowing shortages.⁴ The apostles (men of great faith and devotion to Christ, by the way) experienced physical hunger.⁵ The Word of God tells us that one of the reasons why God allows us to see others go without is so that those of us who have this world's goods⁶ would be given the opportunity to serve the Lord by providing for their needs.⁷

Yes, our faithful Jesus does indeed give food – spiritual, soul, physical food – to the hungry.⁸ Because of the cross our fellowship with God is our primary food; there is no reason for the child of God to suffer the hunger of spiritual emptiness any longer.⁹ Although we will never be as full as we would like while we're in these mortal bodies, the fact is that we've found bread that is truly satisfying.¹⁰ When Paul was living on rations in prison at Rome, his spiritual life enabled him to find contentment in his physical shortages.¹¹

We must always seek to have a balanced view of Scripture. No where does God say that He will provide physical food to a lazy person.¹² Paul had to correct the believers at Thessalonica on this point.¹³

Once again, God makes provision in His word concerning helping those experiencing difficult times. In fact, true fasting involves giving food to those in need.¹⁴ We all experience different types and degrees of hunger. Jesus experienced, as Son of Man, physical hunger too.¹⁵ He is not untouched or unmoved by whatever hunger is gnawing at you today. The hunger for friendship? Food? Jesus knows and cares. Allow Him to fill you first, and watch the rest fall into place.¹⁶

1-1 Thess 5:23; 2-Matt 5:6; 3-Luke 1:53; 4-Deut 8:1-3; 5-1 Cor 4:11, 2 Cor 11:27; 6-1 John 3:17; 7-Matt 25:35,40; 8-Psalm 146:7; 9-John 6:35; 10-John 6:50,57,58; 11-Phil 4:11-13; 12-Prov 19:15; 13-2 Thess 3:6-12; 14-Isaiah 58:5-7; 15-Matt 4:2, Mark 11:12; 16-Matt 6:33.

DAY 13

ACCOUNTABILITY

Personal accountability is the teaching of Scripture.¹ Every believer will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.² It's important that each one of us remembers this.

Each one of God's children is gifted in some particular way.³ There are motivational gifts,⁴ "charismatic" gifts,⁵ and ascension "ministry" gifts.⁶ In other words, we each have work to do. My spiritual lethargy affects you, and vice versa. I think one of the greatest hindrances to spiritual maturity and growth is what I call "the Peter problem". Read John 21:21. Get the point? How can any committed Christian be a good parent, student, employer or employee, serve God and still have time to ask, "But what about brother or sister so-and-so?" I'm amazed that any of us find the time to be a busybody in another saint's spirituality when each of us has so much to attend to in our self. When I stand before the Lord, the only thing that's going to be of any concern to both me and Him is what I've done.

I cannot be using my spiritual gifts in God's prescribed way while I'm being critical or judgmental about what you are either doing or not doing. God wants to use us for His glory.⁷ He wants each of us to be nourished by Him⁸ and, with His love, exercise that talent to build up one another.⁹ No one will receive a reward for being critical. To mentally devour another saint is detrimental to both of you.¹⁰

The exhortation to be an imitator of Jesus¹¹ is couched between passages that speak of unconditional forgiveness¹² and unconditional love.¹³ It's important that we realize that we are accountable for our words¹⁴ and our motives.¹⁵ I say this because I so often "justify" my unscriptural behavior or spiritual inactivity by another saint's treatment or mistreatment of me. How many saints excuse their lack of involvement within the body of Christ because of someone that is doing something, but doing it the "wrong way"?

Ungodly attitudes are never excusable, but human imperfection is going to bleed through the best of our efforts. Does imperfection in you excuse me from unholy thoughts or attitudes about you? No.

As we individually repent of our ego, pride, greed, and imperfections before God's throne of grace, may He fill our hearts with sensitivity to each other,¹⁶ a love that thinks the best and not the worst of others,¹⁷ and a new realization that I can never say, "I don't need you."¹⁸

1-Deut 24:16; 2-2 Cor 5:10; 3-1 Peter 4:10; 4-Rom 12:6-8; 5-1 Cor 12:7-10;
6-Eph 4:11,12; 7-Phil 2:13, 1 Cor 10:31; 8-Col 2:19; 9-Eph 4:15,16;
10-Gal 5:15; 11-Eph 5:1; 12-Eph 4:32; 13-Eph 5:2; 14-Matt 12:36,37;
15-Heb 4:13; 16-Rom 14:13; 17-1 Cor 13:5; 18-1 Cor 12:14-27.

DAY 14

SERVE NOW ... SMILE LATER

“And His servants shall serve Him ... They shall see His face.”¹ Our destiny as Christians is to serve our God in eternity future and see Him face to face.² This is a tremendous source of encouragement in a world of sorrow, pain, crying, and death.³

When idealism replaces realism we are setting ourselves up for a fall. Too many Christians want millennium living now (I wouldn't mind it myself!), but this is not the case. Unanswered questions “haunt” each one of us in our pilgrimage to glory. Jesus promised us the same rain, floods, and winds that the unsaved encounter, with one HUGE difference. When we obey His Word, we will not fall under the pressure.⁴

Note, He didn't say that if we were obedient we wouldn't experience adversity; that's idealism. Rather, He promised we wouldn't fall. Honestly speaking, how many of us bail out of serving and loving Jesus because the floods, etc., come? Serving the Lord is a heart response, birthed in those who know the Risen Christ as Savior and Lord. I know it's unfortunately become a cliché, but the only way to go forward in Christ is by keeping your eyes on Him. Purpose in your heart that whatsoever you do, you will do it as unto the Lord.⁵

Paul was indeed a mighty vessel of the Lord, but do you know what his highest title was? Servant of the Lord.⁶ What about James?⁷ Peter?⁸ Jude?⁹ Moses?¹⁰ Servants do not look to, nor expect, any benefits whatsoever from fellow servants. No, their entire identity and existence and purpose for living is found in their relationship to and with their Master. The same should be true with us.

We must stay close to Jesus at all times because, when we don't, hardness of heart can set in when we experience life's difficulties or disappointments. Being a Christian does not grant us a “tribulation-exempt status”, but it does grant us a “lively hope ... an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fades not away.”¹¹ Where? In heaven!

The full benefits of serving the Lord will not be experienced until we go home to glory. “Thy Kingdom come”¹² is the heart’s desire of each one of His children. Jesus has told us that we, His servants, shall not only see Him, but we’ll also be with Him.¹³ That should inspire us. What will He say? What will I say? I’d like to say: “Lord, You’ve given me this task, and here’s the increase.”¹⁴ To do that, I must not allow myself to be detoured by “the other guy syndrome”.¹⁵ There are no short-cuts, no uncallused hands on His plow, no unshed tears ... just a promise from Jesus that “I’ll personally greet you and make everything clear.” This will be His explanation to all of our questions.¹⁶

1-Rev 22:3,4; 2-Psalm 17:15; 3-Rev 21:4; 4-Matt 7:24-27; 5-Col 3:23;
6-Rom 1:1; 7-James 1:1; 8-2 Peter 1:1; 9-Jude 1:1; 10-Rev 15:3;
11-1 Peter 1:3,4; 12-Matt 6:10; 13-John 14:3; 14-Luke 19:15-19;
15-John 21:21,22; 16-1 Cor 13:12.

DAY 15

CLEAVING UNTO GOD

The Old Testament word for cleave means to “catch by pursuit; follow closely or hard after; join together or stick”. Some translations render it “hold fast”. Its comparable New Testament word literally means “glued to”.

How simple a command, “Cleave unto the Lord.”¹ How simple it is to complicate it. Our entire Christian life is wrapped up in the command to “walk after the Lord . . . and cleave to Him.”² Jesus said, “Follow Me”,³ “Abide in Me”.⁴ In a world of chaos and change, there is peace of both heart and mind in fellowship with the Lord.⁵

When Moses was addressing Israel in Deuteronomy 30, he called heaven and earth to record his plea. He set before them life and death; blessing and cursing. When he said to choose life, he included in that decision the necessity of cleaving unto the Lord.⁶ One of Joshua’s commands to the eastern tribes upon sending them home was to cleave unto the Lord.⁷ In Joshua’s “next to last” farewell speech to Israel’s leaders, he exhorted them to cleave unto the Lord.⁸

God’s purpose is for you and me to cleave unto Him “as the sash clings to the waist of a man”.⁹ Note that His offer can be rejected. When Paul saw the new converts in Antioch, he “encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”¹⁰

Has anything changed? Do we need God less? Fellowship with the Lord Jesus is the sum of all spiritual things. In fact, Jesus declared it to be the definition of eternal life.¹¹ It’s the motivation for prayer,¹² praise, fellowship with other saints,¹³ and giving. Only by sticking to the Lord like glue will we avoid falling apart at the seams in day-to-day living.¹⁴

Life is difficult. God is good. Stick to Him!

1-Deut 10:20; 2-Deut 13:4; 3-Matt 4:19; 4-John 15:4; 5-Phil 4:7;
6-Deut 30:19,20; 7-Joshua 22:5; 8-Joshua 23:8; 9-Jer 13:11;
10-Acts 11:23; 11-John 17:3; 12-Matt 6:6; 13-1 John 1:3;
14-John 16:33.

DAY 16

THE DEW OF HEAVEN

When Isaac blessed “tricky” Jacob, he prayed that God would give unto him the dew of heaven.¹ Dew is moisture that contains the power to refresh. Could it be that this, among other things, is what Isaac desired for his son? I think so. In fact, when “ripped-off” Esau cried for a “left-over” blessing, this heavenly dew was requested for him as well.² It’s significant that the sign from heaven that preceded the manna was this dew.³

How beautiful a picture this gives us. Jesus, the true Bread of Life, is our source of spiritual refreshment.⁴ Dew and manna combine⁵ to give us the essentials we need ... a model of the simplicity of fellowship with Jesus. Interestingly enough, dew prevented from falling⁶ causes a “fruit shortage”.⁷ What can cause the heavens to withhold the dew? As in the case of Haggai’s time, misplaced priorities have this undesired result. Therefore, “Seek ye first”⁸ is the forerunner of heaven’s dew.

We know from nature itself that this invigorating morning dew passes away,⁹ only to reappear the next day. This signifies our need to be spiritually replenished daily.¹⁰ Prayer, praise, time in the Word, and fellowship with other saints are “dew renewal” ingredients. This dew is likened to a spiritual “fountain of youth”.¹¹ Indeed, to grow up in the Lord and yet remain young and fresh in heart spiritually is to be truly blessed.

Another thing that prevents this refreshing process is division. Whether it be in a marriage or any other relationship, or within any local church, unity precedes the flowing of God’s blessings.¹²

Satan knows all about the power of God’s refreshing dew: how it gives birth to strong marriages, healthy churches, effective evangelism, moral purity, etc. This disgusts our enemy, so to prevent that “morning dew” time with God, he will offer a “cuisine” of, perhaps, newspaper or “informative” radio to get you going. He knows unity precedes God’s blessings. His solution? Careless, rude speech that really wounds a child, spouse, or member within the Body of Christ. Argue about differences, pick others apart. How about a good old-fashioned complaining, murmuring, or backbiting party? (He’ll even supply the fire¹³ for the verbal barbecue!)

Listen, God’s favor is as dew upon the grass,¹⁴ and each one of us is in deep need of His favor. Don’t allow the devil the luxury of enlisting you in an “anti-dew” campaign.¹⁵ The Lord’s cry to the church is to come and receive His dew.¹⁶ May the dew of God’s grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness be poured out upon you.¹⁷

1-Gen 27:28; 2-Gen 27:39; 3-Ex 16:13,14; 4-John 6:48-51; 5-Num 11:9; 6-Hag 1:10; 7-Gal 5:22,23; 8-Matt 6:33; 9-Hosea 13:3; 10-Matt 6:11; 11-Psalm 110:3; 12-Psalm 133:1,3; 13-James 3:6; 14-Prov 19:12b; 15-Eph 4:27; 16-Song of Solomon 5:2; 17-Hosea 14:5.

DAY 17

THE FINISHER'S TOUCH

God never starts a project that He is unable to finish. He began the largest building project in the beginning,¹ and Scripture tells us that He finished it.² The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus has finished God's redemptive work. Those words "It is finished"³ thundered out of His lips, disarming the powers of darkness,⁴ tearing the veil in the temple,⁵ and opening the door of fellowship with God to the repentant, believing sinner.⁶ Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith.⁷ God also has a prophetic timetable for the nation of Israel. He will finish that work too.⁸ Likewise, the mystery of God shall be finished.⁹

Has the Lord begun a work in your life? If so, He will complete that work.¹⁰ He's the Master Potter!¹¹ He's the Master Plotter too!¹² Joseph was able to see good in the bad.¹³ We need to follow in his footsteps of walking by faith and not by sight.¹⁴ We all get tripped up by trying to analyze events in our lives. I'm sure Joseph must have asked God: "Why did you allow me to be falsely accused of rape? Why did you allow my brothers to sell me into slavery after I shared with them the dream that You gave me? Why did you allow the butler to have amnesia for two years while I'm in this prison?"

Why, why, why? Good questions. Questions wrapped with the emotions of fear, uncertainty, and sometimes anger. Do I dare say, even questioning God's fairness? When in the valleys of life, never forget the value God places upon your soul. The work that Jesus finished was the fore-ordained plan of God¹⁵ in order to save us from the eternal punishment due for sin,¹⁶ as well as the temporary pollution caused by sin.¹⁷

God is not through with you yet. The only thing that "finishes" our growth is fishing in forbidden territories.¹⁸ Those saved during the great tribulation are found singing before the throne.¹⁹ Our destiny is so bright and glorious! Are you distressed, lonely, upset with circumstances in your life? Jesus knows and cares;²⁰ never doubt that.

May the Master Shepherd put new hope in your heart and a new song in your mouth today.²¹ After all, he's not through with you.²²

1-Gen 1:1; 2-Gen 2:1; 3-John 19:30; 4-Col 2:15; 5-Matt 27:51;
6-Heb 10:19-22; 7-Heb 12:2; 8-Rom 9:28; 9-Rev 10:7; 10-Phil 1:6;
11-Isaiah 64:8; 12-Rom 8:28; 13-Gen 50:20; 14-2 Cor 5:7; 15-Rev 13:8;
16-Rom 6:23; 17-Matt 1:21, Titus 2:11-14; 18-James 1:14,15;
19-Rev 15:24; 20-1 Peter 5:7; 21-Psalm 144:9, Rev 5:9,10; 22-Jer 29:11.

DAY 18

THE PERIOD OF DISCONTENTMENT

God told Israel to rejoice in every good thing that He gave them.¹ Every good gift that we have comes down from God.² I personally believe that the undercurrent of this world's system is the message that more means happiness,³ even though Jesus tells us the opposite.⁴ The media blitz is relentless in its "gospel of discontentment". If we are honest with ourselves, haven't we "bitten the bait" all too often? How many souls thought that "lotto meant life", only to find out that it means vanity?⁵ I hope that you understand what I have to say here.

The goal of Jesus in our lives is not primarily our happiness or easy living, but rather His glory.⁶ Man's glory is like mowed grass.⁷ The newborn child of God is called to a life of glory and virtue.⁸ Paul learned that lesson of contentment.⁹ God trims down the fat of "excessive living" to two things – food and clothing.¹⁰ It's ironic that there are those who preach a message of wealth when it's the love of money that is a snare and is the very root of all evil.¹¹ Just think of all the things people illegally do for money.

I hear so many saints getting worn down these days because of that myth of greener pastures. Our missionary in India, Benjamin, once told me that if any of the flock think they have it bad here they should go live with him for a while. Now, God does honor hard labor and he has been extremely generous to each one of us. However, He never intended that our lives revolve around "the great American dream".

One of Satan's finest and most effective darts is discontentment. Refuse to give him place in your thoughts.¹² If you cannot be content with what you have, you will merely be piling up treasures of discontentment. I think we all fall into the trap of thinking that we deserve more than what we are given.

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes after a fling with the world that would have made Robin Leach blush. His assessment? "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."¹³

God's blessings are not always material.¹⁴ Count your blessings by realizing that everything beyond Calvary is a bonus indeed.

1-Deut 26:11; 2-James 1:17; 3-1 John 2:15-17; 4-Luke 12:15;
5-Ecc 5:10; 6-Rev 4:11 (KJV); 7-1 Peter 1:24; 8-2 Peter 1:3;
9-Phil 4:11; 10-1 Tim 6:8; 11-1 Tim 6:9,10; 12-Eph 4:27;
13-Ecc 12:13,14; 14-Rom 14:17.

DAY 19

“I’M NOT BEING FED”

“Pastor, I hate to say this, and don’t take it personally” (exactly what a dentist says when extracting a tooth), “but I’m not being fed by your teaching anymore.” Anyone in a teaching ministry has heard those words before. I and fellow pastors have had to digest those words from time to time. God uses this to have us check in with Him. However, emotions and feelings set aside, let’s look at God’s word and see what Scripture says about feeding sheep.

We know that feeding the flock is the primary call of any under-shepherd. Jesus gave this mandate to Peter,¹ and Peter passed this counsel on to other elders.² Remember Paul’s parting words to the elders from Ephesus? He told them to feed the flock,³ and gave a two-fold warning of impending danger from outside and inside the church.⁴

In the wilderness, God fed Israel with bread from heaven.⁵ Israel called it “manna”,⁶ or “What is it?” Jesus called Himself the true bread from heaven.⁷ This chapter in John reveals that Christ is the believer’s bread. He was sent to be this world’s Savior.⁸ His gospel message and word are timeless and ever fresh.

Now, the Bible is God’s word given to believers for a number of purposes.^{9,10} Scripture reveals God’s prophetic plan and is intended to be read and understood.¹¹ The food that sheep are to be fed is God’s word. It’s as natural a desire to read and hear God’s word as it is for a breast-feeding child to want a mother’s milk.¹² Growth is expected, but doesn’t always occur due to either lack of application¹³ or carnality.¹⁴

Now it’s a known fact that if a sheep is to grow strong it must eat the right food. Sheep do not have the ability to survive on their own. God has provided for them good food.¹⁵ In the sheep’s physiology, they chew their food over and over, called ruminating. It means symbolically that God’s word needs to be pondered. He provides “holy repetition”. Why? To allow us to ruminate the same truths over and over. It’s this rumination style of feeding that some sheep have a problem with – the “I’ve heard that before” syndrome.

So, my question is, what does someone mean when they say, “I’m not being fed”? Are they saying they’re bored with the repetition? Do they mean, “Teach me something that I don’t already know”? The purpose of God’s feeding us is so that, practically speaking, we may use His words to evangelize and to edify each other.¹⁶

If you today are not being fed, then who are you feeding? Have you learned it all? If you read the parable of the sower in Matthew, do you skip it in Mark or Luke? If your statement that you're not being fed means you're merely hearing the same thing over and over but not understanding or applying it,¹⁷ then you're feeding on facts (manna) and not Bread (Jesus).

Keep eating.¹⁸ Keep exercising.¹⁹ Keep in fellowship.²⁰ The only thing that stunts spiritual growth is a hard heart and closed ears. Hebrews 11:6 is a promise, not a joke!

Conclusion: If you are one of those who is not being fed, don't fault your pastor (unless he's immoral or a flat-out heretic). Don't fault your fellow saints. (Remember – what you give out you get in return!²¹) Do what I've done many times – check your heart.

1-John 21:15-17; 2-1 Peter 5:2; 3-Acts 20:28; 4-Acts 20:29,30;
5-Ex 16:4a; 6-Ex 16:31; 7-John 6:32-35, 47-58; 8-John 3:17;
9-2 Tim 3:16,17; 10-John 5:39; 11-Matt 24:15; 12-1 Peter 2:2;
13-Heb 5:12-14; 14-1 Cor 3:1-3; 15-Psalm 19:7-10; 16-Col 3:16;
17-James 1:22-25; 18-John 8:31,32; 19-1 Tim 4:7,8; 20-Prov 27:17;
21-2 Cor 9:6.

DAY 20

MORTIFICATION THEN RESURRECTION

Do you want to know who gives me the most trouble within the Body of Christ? Pastor, you ask, is it me? No, is my reply. It can't be your wife or children, can it? Again I reply no. Okay, enough suspense. Do you want to know who it is? It's myself!

I've "discovered" lately just how much I need Jesus in my life. Countless "little" things bother me about me. I can be so self-righteous at times that I think I would have made a pretty good Pharisee. I find myself evaluating my spirituality at times by using my Bible knowledge, length of quiet time, whether or not I've rebuked the evil spirit of ESPN, etc. Oh yeah, if I'm really draggin'-down tired due to "ministry", boy do I "feel good" about myself!

Do you know what else bothers me about myself? The fact that when I see you miss the mark in some certain area, how much uglier it looks than when I do the same thing. I really hate it when I find myself feeling bothered or interrupted by a saint who needs an ear when I could be snoozing or playing a video game or something. An "untimely" phone call, an "unscheduled" knock on the door. God help me! I'm tired of observing the mechanics of my walk alone. (See 1 Cor 13:1-3 for reference.)

Now, I'm not on a condemnation crusade, and I sure do not want to bring you along on this "Tragical Ministry Tour". (Secularly, boy am I on a roll now!) Honestly, though, don't you find yourself in this same rut sometimes? The simplicities of truly being a servant of the Lord;¹ the desire of having a tongue of holy fire² instead of a "hell-burner",³ is what I pray for. Oh, that the spirit of Romans 14, balanced by the love of 1 Cor 13, would be seen in me! I'm by nature so judgmental, so irritable, so self-righteous. Only as I set my affections on Him⁴ do I find myself with holy intentions toward you.

We are not each other's judge,⁵ but we are each other's servant.⁶ When the Master is preeminent in my life,⁷ my walk is a pure joy and I'm content in being nothing.⁸ I may be affected by others; unkind, insensitive comments hurt. However, in the final analysis, the greatest culprit to spiritual growth is the old me. I hate the old me; I wish he were dead.

The truth is, he IS dead.⁹ There is this holy mortification process going on in each one of us.¹⁰ We repeatedly have to choose between life in the flesh¹¹ or life in the Spirit.¹² The more "funerals" we have to our flesh, the more life we enjoy in the Spirit. It's that simple. When the "new you" meets the "new me",¹³ great things take place¹⁴ and our Savior is so pleased!

1-Phil 2:3-8; 2-Acts 2:3; 3-James 3:6; 4-Col 3:1; 5-Rom 14:13; 6-Gal 5:13; 7-Col 1:18; 8-John 3:30; 9-Col 3:3; 10-Col 3:5,8,9; 11-Rom 8:5-8; 12-Gal 5:22,23; 13-2 Cor 5:17; 14-Mal 3:16.

DAY 21

HANDLING CONDEMNATION

Scripture tells us that Satan is the accuser of the brethren.¹ (To accuse means to charge someone with error or misdeeds.) We find in the book of Job the most written about, preached about account of how the devil works.² The devil will use anything or anyone to do his dirty work.³

Now, sin is serious business and never to be handled lightly or indifferently. God has one word of advice to deal with every sin – repent!⁴ However, we all still sin⁵ and are overtaken.⁶ After a fall, the enemy attacks immediately with condemnation. If you have truly repented, never allow the devil “mental or spiritual territory” to condemn you. Personally speaking, we must be careful that we don’t “play devil” in matters of judging repentant saints.⁷

Human pride is many times the “noose” of condemnation;⁸ so is “unsound” speech.⁹ Grace is not a license for “anything-goes” living, but it certainly covers our imperfections.¹⁰ As believers we are “un-condemnable”.¹¹

For you who have slipped in the past, and have repented and asked God to forgive you, but still do not have peace, memorize and meditate on Romans 8:1,33,34. It’s a fact, you cannot go forward in Christ while haunted by failures in the past. Remember, condemnation isn’t for those inside the ark, but for those outside of it.¹²

God promises to deal with those condemning verbal assaults.¹³ When Jesus was “condemned”,¹⁴ those men were unwittingly bringing to pass the purposes of God recorded in Romans 5:12-21. By natural birth comes condemnation and death; by new birth comes forgiveness and life.

May the power of the blood of Christ release you today from the cloud of guilt and instill a fresh new awareness of God’s grace.¹⁵

1-Rev 12:10; 2-Job 1:6-2:10; 3-1 John 5:19; 4-2 Cor 7:9,10, Mark 1:15;
5-1 John 1:8,9; 6-Gal 6:2; 7-Rom 14:10, 13; 8-1 Tim 3:6; 9-Eph 5:4,
Matt 12:36,37; 10-Rom 5:20,21; 11-Psalm 34:22, Rom 8:1;
12-Heb 11:7; 13-Isaiah 54:17; 14-Matt 20:18; 15-Eph 1:7.

DAY 22

A FRESH BREATH

The gospel of John is like a breath of fresh spiritual air. Its objective is to bring a person to the saving knowledge of Jesus.¹ Its simplicity is so refreshing because, for many of us, life is very complex. I believe that the distraction level for the believer today is at an all-time high, with heresy abounding, deceptions more subtle, and temptations more powerful than ever. Every God-ordained institution – i.e., church, family – is under attack from without, or eroding from within. To whom do we turn?

John 6 tells us that Jesus is the Bread of Life.² He is the basic substance that we need to truly live, but we spend much of our lives pursuing substitutes. Also, we are so prone to seeking solutions to our symptoms, when our greatest need is to find the answer to the root of every problem. That root is sin, and the answer is Jesus.

Like our first parents in the garden, many of us still prefer the tree of the knowledge of good and evil over the tree of life.³ We want to know what, where, when, why, and how. God wants us to know Who.⁴ It's the Living Jesus who promises us life, abundant life.⁵ When in need, the Word assures us that we can approach Him as One who is faithful and merciful.⁶

Oh, how we need, by faith, to continually touch the hem of His garment.⁷ Why not, right now, put down this article and go to Jesus with that disturbing situation, financial crisis, or troubled marriage, and ask the Master to “only speak a word”.⁸ As John's gospel so clearly reveals, Jesus is the great “I AM”.⁹ He changes not.¹⁰

Meditate upon the power of God, the love of God, and the grace of God until your entire being is overflowing with peace and comfort. This is a part of our godly exercise that is profitable.¹¹ Remember, in the day of battle, Jesus is the Captain of the host for you, just as He was for Joshua.¹² How we need to be Word-minded people! So often we get sidetracked by our emotions and “feelings”.

The only book that never wavers in comforting, directing, encouraging, and promising is the Bible.¹³ Not an end in themselves, the Scriptures point to Jesus.¹⁴ The volume of God's book speaks of Him.¹⁵ Let's get our eyes on Jesus. Consider Him.¹⁶ Behold God's Lamb.¹⁷ May the “last Adam”¹⁸ breathe into you a fresh breath of eternal life today.

1-John 20:30,31; 2-John 6:35,48,51; 3-Gen 2:7-9, 21-3:7; 4-Matt 16:15;
5-John 10:10b; 6-Heb 2:17, 4:15,16; 7-Matt 9:20,21; 8-Matt 8:8;
9-John 8:58, Ex 3:14; 10-Mal 3:6a, Heb 13:8; 11-1 Tim 4:7,8;
12-Joshua 1:9, 5:14a; 13-2 Tim 3:16,17; 14-John 5:39; 15-Heb 10:7;
16-Heb 12:3; 17-John 1:29; 18-1 Cor 15:45.

DAY 23

BLESSED ARE THE FLEXIBLE

Our Israeli tour guide a personal proverb: Blessed are the flexible, for they shall never be disappointed. Now, it's not wrong to have goals or expectations. However, if those goals are "written in stone" so to speak, unless they are God's will for your life, you set yourself up for a great fall. The Bible teaches us that there are things revealed and things that are secretive, or mysteries.¹

Life is not predictable; neither are the ways of God.² You cannot franchise the way God works. Yes, there are general workings of God that apply to us. For example, you can be sure that you are forgiven of your sins if you repent and place faith in the Lord Jesus.³ You can be sure that in doing that an inheritance is reserved in heaven for you.⁴ I've discovered that the only things that I can absolutely count on are things that are eternal.

Everything and everyone, Christians included – as far as pertaining to their physical existence – is subject to change and decay. Praise the Lord that, by His grace, we are also changing for the better!⁵ This entire universe, though, is groaning under the bondage of corruption and decay.⁶ Adam's fall in the garden is what brought sorrow, sweat, pain, and yes, disappointment into the world,⁷ even though Satan promised pleasure with sin. You and I know that all mankind has been "ripped off" by the father of lies⁸ because the pleasure is only temporary,⁹ and Satan's strategy hasn't changed since the garden. He's had plenty of practice, and his success rate is quite good.

The devil capitalizes on those "dry seasons" in your life, those times of mystery when it seems that God is silent. Sometimes God wants us to be silent so that He can speak to us clearly.¹⁰ Like Elijah in our last reference, we can find ourselves confronted by strong winds and earthquake-like circumstances. But in Hebrews 11, we see some of the heroes of the Bible, champions of faith. (An in-depth study of each character will reveal the grace and forgiveness of God.) Now, each individual was serving the same God who gave them the same promises, so here's where the mystery comes in. Why was Enoch taken and spared so much human misery? Noah, though, had to "tough out" 120 years of public ridicule – why? How could Abraham have the faith to trust God with Isaac,¹¹ but not with his own life and wife?¹² Read on. Many great events ... faith boosters.

SCREECH! Put on the brakes! Torture? Prison? Sawn in half? Destitute? Living “on the street”? Are these immoral, ungodly people here? No, they’re people of faith who I’m sure wondered why their Jericho didn’t fall, or their Red Sea split apart. Jesus told us in advance the His program may at times not be what we expect. He told John the Baptist that.¹³

Few guarantees are given in this life, but we’re homeward bound,¹⁴ and until we arrive ... “Blessed are the flexible.”

1-Deut 29:29; 2-Isaiah 55:8,9; 3-Acts 20:21; 4-1 Peter 1:4;
5-2 Cor 3:18; 6-Rom 8:19-22; 7-Gen 3; 8-John 8:44; 9-Heb 11:25;
10-Psalm 46:10, 1 Kings 19:11-13; 11-Gen 22:1-14; 12-Gen 20:1-14;
13-Luke 7:19-23 (esp. 23); 14-John 14:2,3.

DAY 24

THE DANGER OF VIOLENCE

Indeed, as Paul wrote to Timothy, in the last days “perilous times will come.”¹ Men, he said, would become fierce, or literally, savage.² We know from Luke 17:26,27 that a sure sign of the Lord’s return would be a “Noah-like” condition upon the earth. Well, in Genesis we see that among the prevailing sins of Noah’s day was that the earth was filled with violence.³ Note that God said the end is near because of violence through them!

Mark it down, the Lord hates those that love violence.⁴ It is natural for the unsaved man to “handle” violence.⁵ How fallen man drinks the “wine of violence”,⁶ the implication being an intoxication with violent things. I can’t stop thinking about the movie and television industry and how many plots revolve around some type of violence. Ezekiel rightly stated that our cities are full of violence.⁷ We have in the police departments of most major cities a violent crime department. Yes, violence is rising into increasing wickedness.⁸ Violent speech⁹ and violent “eating appetites”¹⁰ are abounding.

Is there any hope? Yes! Jesus Christ came to save those who turn to Him from violence.¹¹ The man after God’s own heart was motivated to pray when he saw the violence and strife in the city.¹²

A born-again Christian is not going to gain any ground spiritually or mentally by feasting on violent programs, music, books, etc. How we need to go back to the same fervor experienced when John the Baptist preached, where it is written that men seized hold onto God’s kingdom forcefully, or violently.¹³ In other words, they earnestly, by God’s grace, rid themselves of anything that would impede their spiritual progress.

Violence grieves me! However, there are causes worth fighting for. There are also things against which we must take a stand and one of them is the pollution of violence in our homes. Being entertained by violence has created a generation of callused hearts that lack genuine compassion. God help us!

One day, though, when Christ is ruling, our streets will once again be safe, and “Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.”¹⁴

1-2 Tim 3:1; 2-2 Tim 3:3; 3-Gen 6:11,13; 4-Psalm 11:5;
5-Isaiah 59:6; 6-Prov 4:17; 7-Ezek 7:23; 8-Ezek 7:11;
9-Prov 10:6b, 11b; 10-Prov 13:2; 11-Psalm 72:14;
12-Psalm 55:1-11; 13-Matt 11:12; 14-Isaiah 60:18.

DAY 25

TEENAGERS – THE LOST GENERATION

Jesus Christ gave the all-inclusive invitation, “Come unto Me”.¹

As we “older folk” know, the teen years are the most turbulent time of life. Peer pressure is like at no other age. The body is changing from child to man, or woman.

Although not completely ignored, teens are probably considered the “most disposable” part of the church. Any attempt made to reach them at their own level comes under severe attack. Why is it that kids praise is appropriate for children, Phil Driscoll is appropriate for young adults, Glad Acapella is appropriate for super conservatives, but Whiteheart or Deliverance is inappropriate for teens? Teens need to be ministered to in a way relative to them.

I get truly stumbled at the mentality that you must have “four-star” nursery facilities because if junior doesn’t feel comfortable, mom and dad won’t come to church, and they tithe! But, who will minister to the teens? That time span of life is important to God too, as evidenced in the Scriptures. Joseph was seventeen when God’s plan for his life began to unfold.² Josiah was eight years old when he began to rule Judah,³ but he didn’t begin to really seek the Lord until he was sixteen.⁴ What about the three Hebrew children and Daniel?⁵ Last, but not least, how about that ruddy-looking, handsome shepherd, musician youth, David?⁶

People take exception to the presence of the youth in some churches, especially those that don’t fit the conservative republican mold. (Where is that in Scripture?) Where would you want them to be on a Sunday morning – at a crack house, hung over, playing golf (sorry, dad), watching T.V. evangelists? I do believe contemporary music is beneficial to them just as the music you get blessed by ministers to you. No, music doesn’t save you. Neither does a Bill Gothard seminar!

Jesus Christ saves those who turn to Him,⁷ the Lamb of God.⁸ John writes that there are young men (and women) who have overcome the wicked one⁹ and are strong through God’s abiding word.¹⁰ I believe Jesus’ words in Mark 10:13-15 apply to teens as well. “In Christ”¹¹ there is no age distinction.

May God open our hearts to the “lost generation”¹² that the Father so dearly loves.¹³

1-Matt 11:28-30; 2-Gen 37:2; 3-2 Kings 22:1; 4-2 Chron 34:3;
5-Dan 1:3-7; 6-1 Sam 16:11-13; 7-John 1:12; 8-John 1:29;
9-1 John 2:13; 10-1 John 2:14; 11-Gal 3:26-29; 12-Lam 2:19;
13-John 3:16.

DAY 26

LIVING FOR GOD'S GLORY

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This passage in 1 Corinthians 10:31 gives to us the singular purpose of the Christian life. We are to live for God’s glory. As you can see from the following verses, that involves being others-conscious. There are times when living for God’s glory will mean forgoing “my rights” if they hinder another person’s view of the True and Living God. Then again at other times, living for God’s glory will mean that your obedience to Him will be met with human disapproval.

The Pharisees lived for man’s approval,¹ but the child of God is not to do so.² When a person’s view of the glory of God is twisted, his or her lifestyle becomes unscriptural.³ Dishonoring God in practice causes the removal of His glory. The departure of His glory gives birth to an “Ichabod” season in one’s life.⁴ A very basic principle of following Jesus⁵ is that He is to be the recipient of all glory, not you and me.⁶

I think a key to living for God’s glory is found in another word – “reputation”. After we’ve established who we are in Christ, we immediately draw the attention of our neighbor, co-worker, spouse, or teammate. Cities set on hills can’t be hidden.⁷ Therefore, warts and all, the believer is on display. We may not want to be in that position, but we are. Just because we are imperfect does not remove us from the responsibility of living an exemplary life.⁸ Lest we think that the previous passage applies only to pastors, teachers, or evangelists, read these few references.^{9,10,11}

Abiding,¹² maintaining a fresh, growing relationship with Jesus is vital. Those who mocked the builder were essentially mocking the Lord¹³ for, you see, it’s His reputation that’s on the line. But living for Christ is extremely difficult if one’s personal time with Him is erratic. Would you want to be misquoted or misrepresented? Neither does God! No true saint plans to fail, and no true saint is “failure-proof”. I wholeheartedly believe that accountability is a word that needs to be lifted out of the grave lest we find ourselves “doing our own thing”¹⁴ and consumed with self.¹⁵ We belong to God!¹⁶

You affect me, I affect you,¹⁷ and bringing glory to God is our grand objective.¹⁸

1-Matt 6:2; 2-John 7:18, 8:50; 3-Rom 1:21-28; 4-1 Sam 4:21,22;
5-Matt 4:19; 6-1 Cor 1:29,31; 7-Matt 5:14; 8-1 Tim 4:11-16;
9-Titus 2:11-15; 10-1 Peter 1:13-16; 11-1 John 3:3; 12-John 15:4-11;
13-Luke 14:28-30; 14-Judges 21:25; 15-Rom 8:5-8; 16-Rom 14:7,8;
17-1 Cor 12:12-14,26,27; 18-Psalm 79:9.

DAY 27

BALANCING RESPONSIBILITIES

Christians are taught in the word of God to be responsible people. There are marital responsibilities¹ and employment-related responsibilities,² among others. We are also to be subject to our government^{3,4} inasmuch as it does not violate the Bible.⁵

Certainly, Scripture does not endorse any type of sluggish, careless living. However, we all need the Lord's help in finding that balance between responsibility and anxiety. Since God does not want us to be preoccupied with the world we live in, I'm confident that He will help us find that balance.

First of all, there are many things in our lives, our world, that we can worry about if we dwell on them, but God's desire is that we be care free⁶ (not careless!). The words of Paul are not more true now than they were when he wrote them, but they certainly are closer to their fulfillment: "the time *is* short!"⁷ That should give us comfort!⁸

However, do we not find ourselves wavering at times between security and insecurity, fear and faith? One thing is for sure, worry is a thief. It will rob you of your joy and peace of mind. When we begin to feel "pulled away" or distracted from fellowship with the Lord, be certain that it's time to take a "mini-retreat" and re-group. No thing, no one, can be more important than the Lord in your life. Jesus' interpretation of the first commandment⁹ is found in Mark 12:29,30. He would never command us to be responsible at the expense of losing fellowship with Him.

Simply stated, if you do not find the time for prayer, devotions, and fellowship, you are out of balance, over-worked and, I'll guarantee, burned out! Jesus is not someone that you squeeze into your schedule; He's your schedule planner!

In Matthew 13:22, the word "care" in the KJV means distraction. Distractions from the things of God are destroyers of fellowship. However, never view clear commands of responsibility as "hindrances of faith". Christianity produces good marriages, good employers, good employees, and good, biblical citizens.

May prayer take away your care today¹⁰ and help you find that necessary balance.¹¹

1-Eph 5:22-33; 2-Eph 6:5-9; 3-Rom 13:1-7; 4-1 Peter 2:13,14;
5-Acts 5:29; 6-1 Cor 7:32a; 7-1 Cor 7:29; 8-1 Thess 4:13-18;
9-Ex 20:2,3; 10-Phil 4:6; 11-Psalm 31:3.

DAY 28

A WORD-FILLED LIFE

Paul wrote that all Scripture is “profitable”,¹ the Greek word meaning helpful, serviceable, or advantageous. In other words, the Bible is beneficial to be read² and put into practice.³ When Paul gave his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, he said that he kept back nothing that was profitable unto them.⁴ By declaring the whole counsel of God,⁵ the apostle had laid a solid foundation.

If we are to go forward in Christ, reading and applying the Word is vital. For one thing, it’s through the Word that we learn more about God, for Scripture tells us about Jesus.⁶ Also, the Scriptures are applicable in every age, and Jesus often demonstrated this. When our Lord gave the two Emmaus Road disciples a Bible study, He began at Moses (the first five books) and all the Prophets.⁷ In Matthew 24:15, Jesus refers to a prophecy found in the book of Daniel.⁸ In Matthew 19:5, He refers to Genesis.⁹ Likewise, in our prayers we should be Word-centered as well. Following “model” prayers, Spirit-inspired prayers, is profitable whether they be found in the Old Testament or the New.^{10,11,12}

How sad to see believers taking a spiritual “profit loss” in exchange for worldly wealth, careers out of God’s will, etc.¹³ How sad to see people embrace dead religious systems, believing that salvation can be wrought by either performance¹⁴ or some ritual.¹⁵

Knowing Jesus personally and intimately is both the goal and the fruit of the gospel. In a relationship with God, grace and peace are multiplied (not subtracted!).¹⁶ Make a fresh commitment to reading God’s Word and meditating on it.¹⁷ It’s the most profitable thing you can do. Mix the Word with faith¹⁸ and rediscover joy,¹⁹ freedom from sin,²⁰ and assurance of eternal life.²¹

1-2 Tim 3:16; 2-Isaiah 34:16; 3-Matt 7:24-27; 4-Acts 20:20;
5-Acts 20:27; 6-John 5:39; 7-Luke 24:27; 8-Dan 9:27; 9-Gen 2:24;
10-Matt 6:9-13; 11-2 Chron 20:6-12; 12-Eph 1:17-23; 13-Mark 8:36;
14-Eph 2:8,9; 15-Gal 5:2; 16-2 Peter 1:2; 17-Psalm 1:1-3, Joshua 1:8;
18-Heb 4:2; 19-1 John 1:4; 20-1 John 2:1a; 21-1 John 5:13.

DAY 29

THE ABIDING LIFE

The Christian life can be summed up in one word – abiding. The Greek root word, “meno”, also means to continue, dwell, endure, own, present, remain, stand, and tarry (Vines Expository, pg. 317). Jesus said, “Abide in Me”.¹

Note that in John 15, Jesus is the source of the fruit of the Spirit.² We are merely branches. The branch, severed from the vine, is fruitless. John talks about this “abiding life” in his first epistle. He writes that it’s a life that follows the example that Jesus gave to us.³ This example is also pointed out elsewhere.⁴ One cannot follow the example of Jesus or abide in Him apart from knowing Him⁵ as Redeemer. Reader, have you received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?⁶ Mankind cannot plead its own case; we need “an attorney”.⁷

Evidence of abiding in Christ is found in the indwelling Holy Spirit.⁸ The Spirit of God is also the anointing John referred to in chapter two.⁹ The Spirit of God is never the source of things that stumble fellow Christians.¹⁰ In love, “liberty” is set aside for the sake of a fellow saint.¹¹ The abiding saint is strengthened by God’s Word.¹²

John, realizing the imminence of the Lord’s return, tells us that only by abiding in Christ can we prevent being ashamed at His coming.¹³ Where are you with the Lord this very moment? We see clearly that abiding in Christ is a deterrent from sin.¹⁴ Probably the most evident manifestation of abiding in Christ is love for God and for each other.¹⁵ Hatred is murder, and “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”¹⁶ The fear of the Lord (which is hatred of evil¹⁷) is the key to abiding satisfied.¹⁸

“Lord, I don’t want a life of theories. I want to know You and You alone. Grant me the grace to abide in You, and may Your love flow through me for Your glory.”

1-John 15:4; 2-Gal 5:22,23; 3-John 2:6; 4-John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21-23;
5-John 15:5; 6-John 1:12; 7-1 John 2:1; 8-1 John 3:24b; 9-1 John 2:27;
10-1 John 2:10; 11-1 Cor 8:9-13; 12-1 John 2:14; 13-1 John 2:28;
14-1 John 3:4-10; 15-Matt 22:37-39, 1 John 4:20,21; 16-1 John 3:15;
17-Prov 8:13; 18-Prov 19:23.

DAY 30

STRETCH FORTH THY HAND

One Sabbath day, the Lord Jesus met a man who had a withered hand.¹ He was being watched with sinister intent by the “church people”. I’d like to draw attention to this miracle of healing from two angles. First, from the physical aspect, the healing that took place was immediate ... on the spot. Only one place in the New Testament is there recorded an implied process of healing.² I might add here though, the healing did occur. Every other healing was immediate,^{3,4} as in our text.

Jesus told the man to stretch forth his hand. This brings us to a second angle from which to view this healing because on the man’s part, this was a step of faith. Not faith in his faith, but in the Master’s word. The result? Immediate healing. No need to tell his hand to act unwithered; no denial of a physical defect. You see, if the man’s hand was not healed but he was to say that it was, that would be positive confession; but it certainly wouldn’t be healing. Do you see the difference?

When God saves, He saves to the uttermost.⁵ When He heals, He likewise does a thorough job. No denial or rebuking of symptoms, no “foul balls”, no errors. Never stop believing God for healing because, sooner or later, you WILL be healed. Likewise, never feel like your faith is weak or inferior because you are not healed right now. We all are going to experience the greatest permanent healing when we move from this “tent” to our eternal home.⁶

I also see here in this passage the need to respond to God’s word. Humanly speaking, Jesus was asking the man to do something impossible. Are you faced with an impossibility today? Has God spoken directly to you from His word? Then you need to act on what He said. Don’t try to reason away the “impossibility”. It won’t work! Instead, listen to what Jesus’ mother, Mary, would tell you.⁷

I’m “gun-shy” of simple solutions for complex problems people face, but I realize that feeding fear will not strengthen faith. Neither will denying the presence of difficulties. But what I do know is the greatest comfort I can offer to anyone; that is: “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”⁸

1-Matt 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11; 2-John 4:46-54;
3-Matt 8:3, 20:34; 4-Mark 1:31,42, 2:12; 5-Heb 7:25;
6-2 Cor 5:1-4; 7-John 2:5; 8-2 Tim 1:12.

DAY 31

ARE YOU READY?

In my walk with the Lord I've experienced what I would call "prophecy" or "end times" cycles. Times, as during Desert Storm, when there seems to be a feverish climate in and out of the pulpit about the Second Coming of Christ. It is both productive and unproductive, fruitful and fruitless. The prophecy maze, like any other debatable issue, has done as much to destroy true fellowship as to enhance it.

May I make a confession today? In the past I was more concerned with the event than with The Person around whom the event revolves. I tracked down, to the point of perspiration, every reference to the end times in Scripture. Then, I examined the positions of godly men. Oh no, Lord! Help! My simple mind couldn't handle the fact that each of these men predicted various timings of the Lord's return in great depth, and by using all of the resources I had. Once again I found myself scratching my head. Not because I doubted anything that concerned my salvation. No, as each day goes by I'm more at rest with Jesus' final cry, "It is finished."¹

Now, I know Jesus is coming back again in the same way that He went,² but I have personally found that the practical commands of God are what I should busy myself with now. I know (no matter what my Rapture position is) that I've been told to occupy.³ I know that every fellow believer who holds the hope of Christ's return "purifies himself, even as He is pure."⁴ I know that I live on the threshold of eternity so I purpose to live a life that glorifies my Savior.⁵

Honestly, I've found holes in each Rapture position, including mine. It's comforting to know that the Father is going to take all of us, regardless of our position.⁶ Jesus is coming like a thief in the night.⁷ Note that Jesus also gives an exhortation about being both busy and ready.⁸ I have many questions. I don't try to hide that. If Jesus can come at any time, can He come today? Am I ready to meet Him? Are you? Have I taken the blessed hope⁹ to mean a mere event or a Personal appearance?

All I'm Scripturally required to do is live second by second as a wise and faithful servant. Whenever that trumpet blows,¹⁰ I, by the grace of God, will be there. Come, Lord Jesus!¹¹

Be ready,¹² be waiting,¹³ be looking,¹⁴ don't "snooze".¹⁵ Abide in Him and you'll neither be surprised nor ill-prepared for Jesus' return.¹⁶

1-John 19:30; 2-Acts 1:11; 3-Luke 19:13; 4-1 John 3:3;
5-2 Peter 3:10-14; 6-1 Thess 4:15-18; 7-Matt 24:42-44, 1 Thess 5:2,
Rev 16:15; 8-Matt 24:44-46; 9-Titus 2:13; 10-1 Cor 15:51,52;
11-Rev 22:20; 12-Luke 12:40; 13-1Cor 1:7; 14-Matt 25:13, Heb 9:28b;
15-1 Thess 5:6; 16-1 John 2:28.

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