

Inside Out

The Biblical Heart of Right Living

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–CONTENTS–

Inside Out	4
Humility	8
Mourn	12
Meekness	16
Kingdom of God	20
Hunger and Thirst	24
Righteousness	26
Merciful	28
Pure in Heart	32
Peacemakers	34
Persecution and Tribulation	36
Let Your Light Shine	40
Living Right	45
Resist Not Evil	51
Avoid Hypocrisy/Prayer	55
Kingdom First; Strait Gate	59
The Strait Gate	63
Appendix One - The Heart of the Matter	71
Appendix Two – Our Lord’s Message	77

THE SCRIPTURES ARE OUR STANDARD FOR TRUTH

2 Peter 1:2-4 - The precious and magnificent promises regarding life and godliness are contained in the knowledge of God. The Bible holds the knowledge of God.

2 Peter 1:20 and 21 - The prophecy of the Scriptures was written by many men, but it has only one author, God. The Bible has the truth, and it interprets itself.

1 Peter 1:23-25 - When we understand and apply the Scriptures, we will be born again with a new and much better life. People and their opinions about life and godliness come and then they go, but the Word of the LORD endures forever. In whom do you want to put your trust? Dr. Phil or Dr. Oz or the republicans or democrats or news commentator or your friends or Almighty God?

I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; **For You have magnified Your word above to all Your name.** Psalm 138:2

The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.
Psalm 119:160

For His lovingkindness is great toward us, and **the truth of the LORD is everlasting.** Praise the LORD! Psalm 117:2

(Psalm 19:7-11; 119:1-176) God's testimony regarding His Word

John 8:31-36 - The truth will make you free, and if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. The Word of God is inherently powerful for the believer.

INSIDE OUT, NOT OUTSIDE IN

1 Peter 2:21-25 - Jesus is our Lord and our example of how to live the good life from the inside out. He endured the cross for us so that we could have a new life. He never allowed situations, circumstances, or people to influence his behavior. With God's help, he always controlled his heart. On the cross he said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" Luke 23:34. He focused his attention on God's Word and not the situation. We know because of what he said in Matthew 27:46 when he quoted Psalm 22.

HOW WE RESPOND TO THE WORLD AROUND US IS ALWAYS DUE TO WHAT IS INSIDE US, NOT THE SITUATION, CIRCUMSTANCES, OR PEOPLE.

Proverbs 4:23 - The heart is the control center of life, the source of all life, therefore the wellspring of life. Jesus knew that life really only changes from the inside out. True and lasting change does not happen by trying to alter our lives' conditions. We are tempted to believe if we get a new job, move to a better location, replace unwanted associations, change churches, diet, exercise, etc., life will change for the better. These outward changes may be helpful to a small degree, but outside adjustments cannot correct inside problems. Manipulating our environment may provide temporary relief but ultimately bring failure. The heart is what must change if we are to have any lasting change. Our Lord's teaching was and is directed at changing the heart.

Only those desiring to stop drinking originally utilized the 12 steps of Alcoholics' Anonymous. However, the program has now expanded to a seemingly endless variety of compulsive, obsessive behaviors such as drug addiction, gambling, overeating, codependence, inordinate sex, compulsive spending, etc. The reason for this extensive growth is people are realizing some deliverance. (Doctors spend almost 50% of their time on psychological problems and often refer patients to step meetings.) The reason the steps work is they were derived primarily from the Sermon on the Mount, 1 Corinthians 13, and the book of James – all sections of the Scriptures that deal specifically with changing from the inside out. If so many are experiencing relief from the twelve steps (that have been watered down from their beginnings), how much more would we be by going directly to the source of this powerful, delivering material?

The heart is the control center of life:

- Hebrews 4:12 - Motives and intentions, contrasted with thoughts, are in the heart. Intentions = a determination to act in a certain way.
- Romans 10:9 and 10 - Believing is an issue of the heart; mental assent is not.
- Mark 12:30 - Real love commences from the heart while fond feeling comes from the mind.
- Matthew 12:34 and 35 - Good and evil spring forth from the heart.
- Matthew 5:27 and 28 - Sin is a matter of the heart and not from superficial transient thoughts.

Jeremiah 17:9 - "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" Everyone is born with a defective heart; no one is born with a "good heart." For Christians, according to Galatians 4:6, "God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts...." However, even a Christian must contend with his own heart that by nature is wicked. With the new birth, the heart of our mind is not automatically changed. We have a new capacity or

potential, but to change the heart still takes a deliberate decision of will and a faithful application of the Word of God.

HOW TO CHANGE THE HEART

James 3:6-8; Matthew 15:18 - We cannot change our own heart. God has to do it for us as we apply the tools provided in the Sermon on the Mount.

“Blessed” means enjoying godly happiness, bringing pleasure or contentment.

Matthew 5- Beatitudes

3	poor in spirit	humble	kingdom of heaven
4	mourn	repentance	shall be comforted
5	gentle	mEEK	inherit the earth
6	hunger and thirst	strong desire	shall be satisfied
7	merciful	compassionate	shall receive compassion
8	pure in heart	_____	they shall see God
9	peacemakers	_____	called the sons of God
10	persecuted ones	_____	reward in heaven is great

What are the three main points of this teaching?

What will you do to gain more knowledge of the Scriptures?

How can you change from the inside out?

HUMILITY



In the first recorded teaching of our Lord, the very first topic presented is humility. Throughout the Scriptures, great emphasis is placed on living today in light of the coming Kingdom. The beginning point for walking with God and conducting our lives in a manner fitting for entrance into the Kingdom is humility. God requires humility!

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves?

Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Humility is the recognition and belief that we are not sufficient of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God (2 Corinthians 3:4 and 5). Simply stated, "We cannot; He can; God help us." Much more than just conceding our limitations and weaknesses, it is acknowledgement of God Almighty's abilities and strengths in our lives. It is to surrender our ways to His ways that are so much higher than our own. The humility we read about in the Bible is a total dependency and reliance upon God and accepting our need for Him and His ways.

Matthew 18:1-4 - Babies are totally dependent upon their parents for everything. They cannot live on their own without help, likewise is our relationship with God our Father.

John 5:19, 30 - Jesus, the perfect man, could not live on his own.

Pride is the Opposite of Humility

James 4:6-10 - God resists the proud because the proud resist Him. To humble ourselves is to empty all desire to exercise our personal will above the will of God. What He wants becomes more important than what we want.

God
RESISTS
The proud

1 Peter 5:5-8 - As we clothe ourselves with humility, God will give grace.

Proverbs 16:18 and 19; 18:12; 28:25 and 26 - To receive help, one must first realize he needs help, next acknowledge God's ability and willingness to help, and finally humbly ask for His help. The prideful fail to do the first step.

God Hears the Humble

Psalms 10:17; 145:14-19 - When we humbly approach our God with love and respect, He hears us and fulfills our desires.

Proverbs 22:4

The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life.

1 Kings 21:25-29 - Ahab was a wicked idolater who caused much harm to many people. Yet, when he humbled himself, God responded.

2 Chronicles 33:12 and 13 - Manasseh was forgiven!

Die to Self Interest and Live for God

Philippians 2:3-9 - Selfishness and empty conceit contrast with humility of mind. The humble are obedient.

Matthew 10:39

He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Matthew 16:25

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

The humble acknowledge that God is almighty and praise Him.

The proud think everything in life revolves around himself. His thoughts and conversation is primarily centered on self.

The humble are thankful knowing everything good comes from God as a gift. He strongly believes he deserves nothing.

The proud lack genuine gratitude. He thinks he deserves what is good, that God and others owe it to him. He tends to be critical, complaining, and discontent.

The humble one does not see himself as better than others.

The proud compares himself to others and feels that he is better than they are.

The humble pray a lot.

The proud do not have time to pray.

The humble prefer others over themselves. Serving others is viewed as a gracious privilege granted by a loving God.

The proud prefer self over others and expect to be served. When they do serve others, they do so always on their own terms.

The humble are God-pleasers.

The proud are men-pleasers.

The humble realize that they do not know anything.

The proud think they know it all and criticize and condemn those who think or believe differently.

The humble know God is in control.

The proud want control of self and others.

In what area of your life do you experience the strongest need to be in control?

What changes will you make to become more dependent on God?

What consequences do you suffer right now because of your pride? How are you going to change?

MOURN

Mourning is generally associated with death, but there is another biblical usage. Mourning is the correct attitude regarding the broken fellowship with God that sin causes. When someone dies, the surviving loved ones experience an almost overwhelming sense of loss. This intense emotion, called mourning, is due to the realization of the loss of fellowship or company with the deceased. Sin causes separation from God and breaks our fellowship or companionship with Him. Sin causes us to move away from God. Our right response to this realization should be to mourn the loss of fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite

James 4:6-11 - While we are caught up in habitual selfish behavior like drug addiction, alcoholism or sex addiction, our wrong behavior does not bother us because our hearts are hard or seared. When we sober up, we start to be aware of wrong behavior, and our conscience tells us it is wrong. These feelings are connected to the understanding of mourning.

Sin

In the least common denominator, sin is missing the mark or disobedience to God (acts of omission or commission). The children of God are called children of obedience and those who live by their own thoughts and will are called the children of disobedience. Ignorance of the right way does not exempt us of sin or the consequences.

The root of all sin is self. Eve had it all, but the devil deceived her to want more – “she could be like God.” She wanted more; hence, self-interest over obedience was the origin of the first sin and all since.

Romans 6:23 - Strikingly communicated throughout the Bible are the harsh and devastating consequences of sin. People are bewildered with problems today yet are clueless as why all the bad things happen to them. No recognition of sin as the cause prohibits any resolution. Our society thinks that good is evil and evil is good.

Mourning begins with recognition of sin, and, for most people, that comes with the consequences sin brings, when people hit their bottom. The understanding of the Scriptures or the confrontation of someone else can also bring the recognition. In 2 Samuel 11, we see one of the great men of all time, David, follow after lust, commit adultery, lie, and murder. God had Nathan

the prophet confront David after which he accepted his sinful behavior, mourned, repented, asked for forgiveness, and received it.

Psalm 51: David asked God to wash him thoroughly of his iniquity and to cleanse him from his sin. God forgave David and gave him a new heart. After this incident, the Scriptures say, "David was a man after God's own heart."

1 Corinthians 5:1; Ephesians 4:17-20 - The beginning of mourning is the awareness and acceptance of our sin.

True Godly Mourning (2 Corinthians 7:7-11)

Earnestness is serious attention to what we are thinking, saying, and doing. In our darkness, we are unconcerned about our thinking, saying, and doing. We are indifferent and thoughtless toward God and the things of God.

Vindication is a full acceptance of the responsibility of the sin and a strong desire to vindicate oneself for the wrong caused by it. This clearing includes making amends with others whenever possible. In darkness, we rationalize our sin and blame others, circumstances, or situations. Rather than admitting the error as our own, we shift the blame to others or dismiss it as not being that significant — "no big deal." We live with the sin and do not care enough to change.

Indignation is to become very upset at our own sinful living. It is a righteous anger directed at one's own sinful behavior. Walking in darkness, we become very passive and accepting of sin. Life without God becomes normal.

Fear is reverence, awe, and respect directed toward God along with a fearful concern for what He thinks. Walking in darkness, our thoughts of God diminish because our focus is on self and the things of the world. Without God in mind, our attitude of reverence and worship dissipates. We develop an irreverent attitude toward Him and no longer care what He thinks of us.

Longing is to have an urgent, passionate hunger for God and the things of God. Walking in darkness encourages hunger for and involvement in things of the world. Lust, selfishness, and worldly desires replace desire for God.

Zeal is to be hot, fervent, on fire for God. As we walk in darkness, life becomes humdrum and complacent. Time and life slip away with no urgency pertaining to godly living. We have no fire for godly living.

Avenging of wrong is to make right or just what was wronged while we were sinning. Walking in darkness, we lose interest and do not care that our evil has its way in hurting other people.

Ahab and Manasseh, men who committed great evil that hurt many people, became humble, asked for forgiveness, and received it.

Psalm 103:8-13 - "Mercy toward them that fear Him,"

Luke 15:11-24 - The son thought he could make it on his own, only to realize utter failure and total humiliation. He went from the loving care of his father to a situation where no one cared enough to give him even pig food. The father was not harsh, critical, or condemning; he was compassionate.

1 John 1:5-10 - Our fellowship with God is conditional upon our walking in the light, and, when we fail to do so, confessing our sin.

What is sin?

What sin or sins need to be eliminated from your life?

What must you do to receive forgiveness of sins? _____

With whom must you make amends? _____

Meekness

Matthew 5:5 - Meekness is receptivity toward God and the things of God. Meekness is acceptance of God's will without being argumentative and without stubborn resistance. It is a willing cessation of our own thoughts, opinions, and ideas for God's. Meekness, simply stated, is the willingness to listen, hear, and do God's will. Since God is the Creator and the Provider, to be meek to Him is very logical.

Matthew 7:7-11 - We should run to God with open hearts and ears to receive guidance in everything we do.

Psalms 145:14-21 - When we seek God with meekness, He will fulfill our desires. (When the word "LORD" is in all caps, it indicates the proper name of God – YHWH, English Yahweh.)

Human nature is egocentric and, as such, prideful – hardhearted toward God. Rather than relying on God, man tries to figure out life on his own which is why he basically lives in utter depravity.

Psalms 22:26 (KJV) - *The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD [Yahweh] that seek him: your heart shall live forever.*

Psalms 25:9(KJV) - *The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.*

Psalms 147:6(KJV) - *The LORD [Yahweh] lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground.*

Psalms 149:4(KJV) - *For the LORD [Yahweh] taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.*

Humility Precedes Meekness

Numbers 12:3 - Moses was very meek because he was humble

Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 10

Humility precedes meekness. When a spiritually-minded person is truly humble, he or she will be meek to receive from God. Humility prepares us to listen to God because we realize our need for His help. Moses was so meek because he was genuinely humble.

Psalms 103:7

He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel.

God was not only able to show His acts to Moses (as He did to Israel), but much deeper His ways, because Moses was meek.

Matthew 11:29 and 30

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Meek to Know

For God to teach and guide us, we must be open to hear — to be meek. When Jesus Christ told what his public ministry was to be, he quoted from Isaiah.

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord GOD [Yahweh] is upon me; because the LORD [Yahweh] hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.

Matthew 13:11-18 - Jesus did not teach everyone. He taught the meek. To others he spoke in parables.

Jesus was not sent to Israel, rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24). He sent the apostles to the lost sheep (Matthew 10:6). Jesus told Peter three times to go to the sheep (John 21). Sheep are humble and meek.

Roadblocks

Acts 17:11 - The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they heard was the truth.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 - The Thessalonians received the Word of God as the word of truth.

James 1:21 and 22 - Receive with meekness the engrafted word.

Mark 7:1-13 - Tradition can be a major roadblock to a correct meek attitude.

Traditionalism causes many to be stubbornly resistant to God's Word and to be fossilized in their limited knowledge. The religious people in the Bible had a hard time being meek because of their traditions. "This is the way it has always been. This is the way it should always be!"

We also hinder growth by limiting God to our meager framework of understanding. When we consider the great magnitude of God's knowledge contained in His Word, we see how foolish and prideful we are to limit ourselves to our minuscule understanding. The infinite, eternal God can never be fully contained within our small, finite knowledge or understanding of Him. However greatly we may mature, we will never know all and can still learn more. Ever notice how God continually refers to us as children and not adults? How could anyone ever think his knowledge

is complete and refuse to learn more? Yet, this is a common deception to which many fall prey. Often an honest, sincere desire to believe, think, and speak accurately about God moves to a presumptuous conviction that our beliefs contain the whole truth about God. This has the practical effect of confining God to our understanding. Everyone is convinced that what he believes is the truth. That is why he believes it! None of us would say our beliefs in any way limit God. However, quite often the unintentional consequence is that our concept of God is limited to the rigid structure we have built in our own minds. The honest, sincere desire to be right slips into narrow mindedness or close mindedness. We become deceived into not considering anything other than what we believe to be true. In doing so, we think we are taking a stand for God! From this posture of mind, it is a very small step to criticize, condemn, and fear all those who believe differently than we do. "Surely they must be wrong because they do not believe what I believe." Too often, we perceive other sincere, committed Christians as a threat because their beliefs are different from ours. Therefore, we think we must avoid them.

Gentleness

"Meekness" is often translated "gentleness" in other versions.

1 Corinthians 4:21 - Paul asked the Corinthians if they wanted him to come with the spirit of gentleness or with a rod.

Galatians 6:1-10 - When helping others, we must do so with gentleness, not with arrogance or harshness, but with humility.

2 Timothy 2:25 and 26 - We all need help at times, but it is hard to receive if the person helping is not gentle.

2 Peter 3:15 - Gentleness, not judgment or condemnation, wins people.

Inherit the Earth

Psalms 37:1-3; 9, 11, 22, 27, 29, 34 - When Jesus Christ returns, part of our inheritance is to dwell in the land. The promise was originally given to Abraham and is extended to all who have faith. God repeatedly told Abraham that he would inherit the land (Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:17 and 18; Romans 4). He also told him that his seed would inherit the land as an everlasting possession. According to the Old Testament prophets, when the Messiah returns, the earth will be changed in a most beautiful way. Eventually, it will return to paradise (Isaiah 35:7; 40:4; 41:18 and 19; 43:19).

God originally made man to be earth dwellers (Genesis 1 and 2). Adam and Eve lived in paradise on earth, not heaven. Jesus told the malefactor that he would be with him in paradise, not heaven (Luke 23:43). Paul was given a vision about the future and shown paradise (1 Corinthians 12:4). The Apostle John was given revelation about the future age again showing paradise (Revelation 2:7).

What is meekness in your own words? Have you been receptive to the will of God?

Why does humility precede meekness?

In what area of your life is pride preventing you from being humble and meek?

With whom do you need to evidence more gentleness?

Kingdom of God

Jesus' teachings set forth a much better life, an abundant life, and of even greater importance, eternal life in the coming Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is the unifying theme prevalent throughout the Scriptures. It serves to draw the Bible's diverse parts together into a complete whole. The teachings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels build upon and are in complete harmony with all the Old Testament prophets. His teachings are also consistent with and fundamental to that of the apostles in the New Testament. A harmonious, progressive theme is maintained throughout the Scriptures. *The prophets, Jesus, and the apostles all remain faithful to the same theme and never contradict each other. This theme is simply stated in the Gospels as the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven.*

The Kingdom of God is the Overall Theme of the Scriptures

"Kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are one and the same. "Heaven" figuratively refers to God. Kingdom of Heaven occurs only in Matthew. A comparison of Matthew with the identical records in the other Gospels proves that the phases are interchangeable (Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:14 and 15; Matthew 10:5-7 and Luke 9:1 and 2).

Jesus consistently taught the Kingdom of God – Matthew 4:17, 23; 9:35 - 10:1, 7; Luke 10:9; Acts 1:3

The angel told Mary, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32 & 33). The Magi asked Herod, "Where is he born King of the Jews?" (Mat 2:2). At the end of his life, Pilate asked him, "Are you King of the Jews?" (Luke 23:3). On the cross above His head in three languages hung the words, "Here is the king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus often speaks about the Kingdom of God – Matthew 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 13, 33; and 7:21.

The Kingdom of God Defined

One short phrase in the most popular Christian prayer simply states what the Kingdom is – "Thy kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

God's supreme purpose has always been and still is to have a loving, harmonious, eternal family. Succinctly stated, "You shall be My people, and I will be your God"- (Exodus 6:7; Jeremiah 7:23,

11:4; 30:22; Ezekiel 36:28; Leviticus 26:11-12; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 26:18; Revelation 21:1-7; Ephesians). His plan is called "The Kingdom of God."

Romans 3:9–18 - Today, man's will is done, which is why evil and depravity fill the earth. The Kingdom of God is not here now; it is coming.

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:9 - God created Adam and Eve in His image enabling them to have sovereignty upon the earth under God's absolute rule. In this original environment and in his original state, man would live a loving, harmonious life with God and mankind forever. Sin, sickness, sorrow, and death were nonexistent in the Garden of Eden. Peace, love, joy, and life flourished.

However, after being enticed by the serpent, Adam and Eve made the choice to disobey God's direct command. The consequences of their choice were cataclysmic, affecting every aspect of creation. Their dominion was greatly diminished, the earth was corrupted, and their harmonious relationships were tarnished with enmity and contention. Sin enveloped mankind as Satan, the god of this age, became the primary influencing agent. Their eternal life was replaced with death.

The fall of man indeed destroyed God's original plan but by no means deterred God from His purpose. Immediately after the fall, God set in motion the plan to redeem man and to restore the earth to its Paradise state. As the Scriptures progress, this plan becomes its main theme called by Jesus the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 2:7; 21:1–4; 22:14 - Paradise is re-created

The righteous will regain dominion over God's recreated earth. Man's relationship with God will be like it was before the fall: righteous, holy, pure, totally unfettered by sin. The righteous ones will live forever with the Lord Jesus Christ and God on the Paradise-like earth. At that time, what the angel said to Mary in Luke will be fulfilled (2 Samuel 7:12-14; Psalms 132:11; Isaiah 9:6 and 7; 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5 and 6; Ezekiel 34:23 and 24; 37:24 and 25; Amos 9:11).

When Jesus Christ returns, the resurrection of the just will take place. In this resurrection, all the believers who have died will be raised again. The believers who are alive at his coming will be transformed simultaneously with the resurrected ones (1 Corinthians 15). Until this event, the only one who died and was resurrected from the dead is Jesus. All others who have died are still dead.

Jesus will begin to rule in his Kingdom on earth. All the nations of the world will be brought into subjection to him. The resurrected saints will reign with him for a thousand years. Satan will be chained in the bottomless pit during this period. This time is called the regeneration because there will be a new life, a re-creation. The changes are going to be radical and encompass everyone and everything. The undesirable and unproductive geographic features of the earth will be changed. Valleys will be exalted, and mountains will be brought low (Isaiah 40:4). Deserts and wilderness will flourish with vegetation (Isaiah 35:7; 41:18 and 19; 43:19).

The weapons of war will be burned with fire for the first seven years after Christ returns (Ezekiel 39:9). All war will end, and the weapons will be molded into tools of agriculture (Isaiah 2:4; Micah

4:3). Animals will be vegetarians and peacefully coexist with each other and mankind (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25). All these changes will evolve until in the end Paradise will be established on earth.

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be loosed for a short time. He will attempt to deceive the nations into revolting against Christ. However, he will be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7–10). At this time, the second resurrection, that of the unjust, will come to pass. All those who are not written in the book of life along with death and the grave will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-13). After all of this, Jesus the Christ will deliver the Kingdom to his Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Then God will rule all and dwell among His people. Mankind will live with Christ and God in the new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3). Again, the tree of life will be in the midst and give life and healing to the nations of the world (Revelation 21 and 22). Finally in the end, God’s supreme purpose to have a loving, harmonious, eternal family will be a reality.

The Sermon on the Mount teaches the right attitude and behavior we are to have in a relationship with God and man, the how of living godly in this ungodly world as we strive to enter into the Kingdom of God as set forth.

Matthew 6:33 - but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

What is the unifying theme prevalent throughout the Scriptures?

In your words what is the kingdom of God and when will it come?

How can you change your life to seek the Kingdom of God more?

HUNGER AND THIRST

Matthew 5:6 - God honors our free will. Even if our inclination is pride, sin, and stubborn resistance, He will have regard for our choice. Jesus communicated a virtuous progression to develop godly desires which will enhance fellowship with God. Humility eliminates pride. Mourning eliminates sin. When pride and sin vanish, we become meek to receive God's will. Humility, mourning, and meekness lead us to desire His righteousness. When His desires become our desires, He will bring them to pass.

Psalms 37:4 and 5 - God will give us His desires if we ask Him. Matthew 7:7-11

That which we **want** determines that which we think and do. *Before* Christ what we wanted was not what God wanted. Our wants were according to the standard of the world, governed by the prince of the power of the air.

Ephesians 2:1-3 - The words "want," "desire," and "lust" are very similar. "Want" is to feel that one needs or would like to have, to wish for. "Desire" is to long or hope for someone or something. "Lust" is to have an intense desire or need, to crave. Whatever we passionately want, desire, or lust for occupies our thoughts and life.

James 1:13-15 - Blaming someone else, situations, or circumstances for our own sinful behavior is so easy. "If you didn't do that or say that, I wouldn't have gotten angry." However, the Word of God emphatically and frequently communicates that no one or anything is to blame for our own sin. We sin because we choose to sin!

**Appetite
Determines
Lifestyle**

James 4:1-3; 1 John 2:15-17 - Man with all his clever manipulations by his lust still never receives what he needs most. That which truly satisfies can be found only in God. The void in our lives is for God.

When a person finally stops trying to do for self and turns to God for help, he still does not receive if his request is based on inordinate lust, instead of respect and love for God.

When we love the world and the things of the world, worldly desires will lead us around by the nose. Satan is the god of this world. Worldly desires end in sin and cause separation from God, destruction, and death.

Psalm 37:1-11

Righteousness

Romans 3:21-26 - To be right with God is a free gift from God through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9 and 10 - If we have faith that Jesus is Lord, we obey his commands.

Matthew 7:21 and 22 - Just saying Jesus is Lord is not enough.

To some, grace and works are opposite, conflicting concepts. However, the Scriptures teach differently. The love of God was the motivation for giving His son which obviously is entirely by His grace. No one has ever deserved, or could even earn, the gift of salvation. Man cannot save himself. God had to do it for him in the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:7 and 8). Man has the responsibility to have faith in God and the redeeming work of Christ. Faith implies obedience. Faith and obedience are inseparable, corresponding realities. If genuine faith exists, then of necessity the works of obedience are also present. If Jesus is our Lord, then we must obey. However, faith and obedience do not make salvation available, grace does. Faith and obedience are the necessary requirements to accept the gift that is offered by grace.

Ephesians 4:21-24 - We must walk in obedience.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness

Matthew 6:33 - Live today for the coming Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Proverbs 10:30

The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

They shall be Filled

The promise for those who hunger and thirst is that they will be filled or satisfied. The “wants” are what torment us today! As we seek God’s righteousness today, we will be filled according to our appetite. As we remain faithful unto the end, we will be fully satisfied with righteousness at his return.

Isaiah 60:18-21 - The people of God shall all be righteous.

When the Kingdom of God is fully realized, only righteousness will prevail.

2 Peter 3:13

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

What do you want the most in your life? How do you know?

How do you shift the blame for your sin to someone or something other than yourself?

What righteous acts do you need to do more?

Merciful

Colossians 3:12

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

According to the dictionary, today the words “mercy” and “compassion” are very similar.

Mercy is kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly. It is kindness or help given to people who are in a very bad or desperate situation.

“Compassion” is sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it, a feeling of wanting to help someone who is sick, hungry, in trouble.

Without Christ in our lives, hardheartedness and indifference to the needs of others are normal. When Christ is central to us, compassion is normal. We feel for the needs of others and have the spiritual ability to really help because of Christ within. We may not be able to alleviate their difficult situation, but we can help them from the inside out.

Love Your Neighbor

Luke 10:25-29 -When the lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" The essence of his question was: "Who am I to love?"

Luke 6:27 and 28; Matthew 5:43-48 - Love your enemies.



"Neighbor" is indeed not a hard or complicated concept. "Neighbor" means the one who is near. The Greek word for “neighbor” is translated elsewhere in the Bible "near." Whomever crosses our path, whether they are loved ones or enemies, we are to love.

Luke 10:30-32 - Levite was a temple minister. The priest and Levite were religious men who claimed godliness. Yet, somehow these men were able to justify within themselves not getting involved.

They saw the man with their eyes, but their hearts were blind with hardheartedness and indifference.

Verses 33-37 - Samaritans were deemed to be enemies of the Judeans. The acts of the Samaritan in comparison to the priest and Levite give us our understanding of mercy. Unlike the priest and Levite, the Samaritan saw with his heart and was unconcerned about the inconvenience his involvement would cost.

I Will Have Mercy and Not Sacrifice

Matthew 9:10-13 - Our Lord had a heart full of mercy and always looked for those he could lovingly heal. He considered himself a physician. He told the self-righteous, pious ones to go learn the meaning of "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

Matthew 12:7 and 8 - The Pharisees were hard-hearted toward the needs of men. They were open-hearted toward rules, laws, traditions, protocol, procedures, and appearances. They were concerned about religion and not God and His people.

Hosea 6:4-6 - Their mercy was fleeting like the morning dew.

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD [Yahweh] require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

God
Requires
Mercy

Without Partiality, Without Hypocrisy

James 1:21-27 - Pure religion is merciful and without hypocrisy.

James 3:17 - God's wisdom is without hypocrisy.

Matthew 6:1-4 - Our righteous acts are not to be done to be seen of men for their praise.

Philippians 2:1-5; 1 John 3:16-18 - Have the mind of Christ.

Inherit the Kingdom

Matthew 25:31-46 - If we show mercy today, He will show mercy in the Day of Judgment.

With whom have you lacked compassion, and why?

What can you do to immediately change to become more loving?

How do you feel about the judgment that will come when Christ returns (Matthew 25)?

Pure in Heart

Each beatitude is accompanied with a promised blessing. Although some of these blessings may only be partially realized today, they will be completely fulfilled when Christ returns. The humble and persecuted are promised the Kingdom of Heaven which begins when Christ reigns on earth. Those who mourn shall be comforted. In the new heaven and earth, comfort (currently unattainable) will exist because death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be gone forever. The meek will inherit the earth, those desiring righteousness will finally be filled, and the merciful will obtain mercy – all in the glorious day to come. **The pure in heart shall see God.** No one sees God today.

The Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle John were both privileged to see a vision of God's throne room. The seraphim Isaiah saw said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:" (Isaiah 6:3). The four beasts John saw "...rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty...." (Revelation 4:8). The holiness of God is unquestionable. His purity is absolute, without any evil at all. Not an atom of darkness is within Him.

For mankind to have any kind of relationship with God, we must live holy lives. "Purity" and "holiness" are synonyms, while sin is the opposite. The grace and mercy of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ have made it available for those of faith to live holy. Thereby, they are enabling fellowship with God. Obedient children live holy lives.

Romans 3:9-21 - No one is born with a pure heart; however, we are born again with holy spirit which is making us new inside.

Romans 5:5 - After Jesus ascended, he sent forth the holy spirit to his disciples and created a whole new life in which holiness and purity of heart can prevail.

Romans 5:12-21 - We now have two separate ways we can live our lives. Non-Christians have only one way.

Galatians 5:16-26 - We can walk by the spirit or the flesh.

1 Peter 1:13-16 - Our walk with God today involves the constant struggle of presenting our "...bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1). We live in an evil age that is constantly influenced by Satan. Because we have not yet been given new bodies wherein dwells only righteousness and holiness, we must contend with the sin nature. Satan's influence from without and the sin nature within limit our effectiveness with holy living. Jesus told us to pray daily for the forgiveness of our sins because sin is a constant issue with all of us.

Revelation 21:1-4 - If we remain faithful, in the end we will dwell with God and see Him face to face.

The Sermon on the Mount provides detailed instruction on how to have and maintain a pure heart. For those who obey Jesus' commands, purity of heart is a reality, and fellowship with God is enjoyed

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9 - Before making peace with others, we must first be at peace with God. As we have emptied ourselves of pride, mourned our sin, sought God with meekness, and reached out to others with mercy, our hearts have gone through a purifying process. The failures, anxieties, and powerlessness we have experienced have caused us to seek help. We came to the realization that the only true answer to our situation is through a relationship with Almighty God. As we cast our cares to Him, He continues to strengthen us and fill us with His peace.

1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 3:1-3 - The nature of man is such that he is contentious.

If we are to walk with God, then we must become peacemakers because we will always be confronted with strife. We are commanded to follow peace.

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Ephesians 6: 15

...having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace....

The peacemaker is one pure in heart who, having received the peace of God in his own life, brings peace to his neighbor. Showing us the complete opposite of peacemaker and helping us to understand the concept are the following antonyms: the one who disturbs; agitates greatly; stirs up trouble; makes an uproar; causes discord, dissension, division; a contentious, brawling, fighting person.

A peacemaker understands God's will for peace and is willing to do whatever necessary to ensure peace prevails.

Romans 12:14-21 - If it be possible, live peaceably. We must be willing to allow God to be in control and not try to force others to do what we think.

Romans 14:1-19 - Being loving and yielding is not compromising on your own faith. We must understand that maturing takes time.

Philippians 2:1-3 - Selfishness and vain glory destroy unity and peace.

Verses 4:6 and 7 - Prayer aids in peacemaking.

Colossians 3:12-14 - Some people do not want to live peaceably. Therefore, we must avoid getting caught into their evil.

Matthew 5:25 and 26 - Contentions have the nature of escalating rapidly, so we must deal immediately with them. If you have issues with someone, use your words in a loving non-judgmental way to talk with the person, and do not harbor the stuff in your heart because it will grow.

Matthew 18:15-17 - This is a godly format to follow when experiencing difficulties with a brother.

Romans 10:15 - As we speak God's Word to others, it will bring peace.

Questions to Consider:

What feelings do you experience when you know within yourself that you have an unresolved issue with another person?

When you think of making peace with others, which relationships do you feel need mending?

Are there factious parties that you can help to resolve their conflict?

Persecution and Tribulation

Matthew 5:10-12 - Everyone (Christian or non-Christian) suffers until Christ returns. Christians are not exempt but are enabled to respond victoriously. God promises that He will always be with us especially through the inevitable struggles of life.

Not Optional

Matthew 13:19-23 - "Persecution" is to be treated cruelly or unfairly especially because of our beliefs, to be constantly annoyed or bothered. "Tribulation" is the distress or suffering resulting from oppression or persecution. The aim is to rip us away from God's Word and cause separation from God.

John 15:20 - Persecution is not optional.

John 16:33 - Our response is to be the opposite of what is natural. Cheer is on the other end of the response spectrum. Our response is to be supernatural, above that which is natural.

Throughout history Christians have had varying degrees of persecution, often determined by the society and government within a country. Such is true still today in many parts of the world. Whether we are outwardly persecuted for our faith or not, Satan is still the god of this age and as such our personal adversary.

Godly Response

We cannot stop the abusive words, acts of enmity, and false, evil communications of others. We can determine our response.

Within
Determines
Without

To rejoice and be exceedingly glad in persecution, we must have the right attitude of heart. We must permit God to work in us. Pray!

Persecution, on the surface, may seem to be designed to push us away. However, the aim is the opposite. Persecution is evil, attacking us, tempting us to respond in kind.

Persecution does not separate us from God. The evil with which we respond does.

Matthew 5:44 - The persecutor should receive the blessings of our prayers, not reciprocal persecution.

The pain that the persecutor causes acts as a signal.

Persecution
is a
Signal to act

To the deceived, it may be a signal to respond in some addicted, obsessive, or compulsive way.

To the sober-minded, pain can be a signal to run to God for His help and comfort. For those who respond in a godly manner, persecution is something in which to rejoice because it draws them closer to God, and He has promised to reward them. Psalm 18:1-3

Prayer is a proper, godly response to persecution.

Romans 12:14

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Psalm 31:9-24 - David, when persecuted, ran into the arms of God.

2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10 - Paul took pleasure in persecutions because they helped him to realize his weakness and to rely humbly upon God which made him strong.

Great is Your Reward

Romans 5:2-4 - Focus on the hope of the return of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:17 and 18 - Afflictions or tribulations are light compared to the eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 4:17 and 18 - Persecution is a lever to draw closer to God; therefore, we can indeed rejoice.

1 Peter 2:19-23 - His godly attitude toward the suffering is our example. His concern was not man's justice but God's will. When we embrace this concept, we enjoy freedom from the negative attacks of people and the world.

1 Peter 3:12-4:1 - God knows when we are suffering and will help us.

1 Peter 4:12-16 - Have the same mind

Have you experienced any persecution that has caused you pain? How can you direct the pain to God and replace it with joy?

Paul said, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Corinthians 12:15). Can you relate to Paul's point of view expressed in this verse?

In what situations, when you have been offended, could you have responded with a blessing? What area of your life needs to be changed to be more Christ-like?

Let Your Light Shine

Steps eleven and twelve of the 12 step program are as follows:

- Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

These steps were taken from Jesus' instruction to let your light shine.

Matthew 5:13-16 - When the blessed attitudes described by Jesus become our attitudes, then we are the salt of the earth and the lights of the world.

Salt of the Earth

Salt is associated with integrity. Salt was also known for its purifying, preserving, and healing qualities.

Living as our Lord instructs, we become the salt of the earth. Should we choose to live outside of that life, we are like salt that has lost its savor (saltiness). Then, our integrity is empty, and our ability to purify, preserve, and heal in the world becomes ineffectual. Without Christ, we are good for nothing. Obeying Christ, we have a powerful influence on the world.

Ye are the Light

Matthew 5:14-16 - As we obey our Lord's commands, we are lit up. Our lives are very different from what is normal in the world. We are to let our light shine so that God may be glorified.

Glorify
Your
Father

The great aim of the Christian Church is to glorify God and help others to do the same.

Philippians 2:14-16 - As we live this godly life, we are to hold forth the gospel of the Kingdom so that others can do the same.

The great commission of the Church is: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:" (Matthew 28:19 and 20). "Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15).

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - The ministry of the Church is the ministry of reconciliation.

We Are
Ambassadors
For
Christ

THE LAW

Matthew 5:17 and 18 - The Law refers to the old covenant, the Mosaic Covenant. Jesus fulfilled part of the Law when he became the sacrifice for sin and the high priest. However, much of what the prophets said he has not yet fulfilled. When he returns, then he will fulfill all. We can have absolute confidence that everything which was prophesied in the Scriptures will indeed come to pass.

The Law was Israel's responsibility in fulfilling the old covenant of which they fell very short of doing. Jesus Christ established a new covenant with new commandments for followers to obey. Christ is the end of the Law unto righteousness (Romans 10:4). The Law was given to hold mankind in until Christ would come. It served as a teacher and a type until Christ, but, now that Christ has come, we are no longer under the Law (Galatians 3:17-24). Christ abolished the Law of commandments with his blood (Ephesians 2:13-16).

Many of the principles of truth contained in the Law, Jesus included in his teaching and even brought a great depth of understanding and commitment. He raised the requirement on some issues.

Matthew 5:19 - How we respond to the commandments that Jesus has given will have impact on how we are perceived and placed by God in the coming Kingdom.

Verse 20 - The Pharisees righteousness was based upon the Law of Moses and primarily on the oral law which is the rabbi's interpretation of the written Law. Therefore, their doctrine was not based entirely upon truth. Their traditions were more important than God's Word. In addition to wrong doctrine, they were hypocrites. What they demanded that others do, they themselves did not do (Matthew 15:1-9).

Matthew 23:1-35 - Our righteousness must be based on God's Word, and we must avoid hypocrisy at all cost.

In the remainder of chapter five, Jesus states five times, "Ye have heard that it was said" (21, 27, 33, 38, and 43). He did not say, "It was written." Some of what he deals with is written, but some is not. He provides insight into what God had written, and clarified what had been wrongly interpreted and taught as the oral law by the Pharisees.

What Jesus taught, if applied, will keep the believer from the world.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Galatians 1:4; 6:14

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Jesus teaches how to deal rightly with others without getting pulled into the world. His teachings are radical and often the opposite of what most think and do. How we respond to others will determine our walk with God.

Matthew 16:24

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Is there someone you should immediately reach out to and share the gospel of the Kingdom?

How did Jesus fulfill yet not destroy the Law?

What specific thing must you change in order to separate yourself from the world?

Living Right

The Law was part of God's covenant with Israel which had been established at Mount Horeb. Jesus began a new covenant with his crucifixion. We have the responsibility to obey his commands, not the Law.

After Jesus confronts the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, he begins a series of teachings on six subject matters. The Pharisees boasted themselves as the vanguard and sole interpreters of the Mosaic Law. In reality, they were just the opposite. They developed an extensive system of oral traditions made up of commentaries and discussions about their interpretation of the Scriptures. They regarded this work equal to (if not more valuable than) the Word of God. They ruled Israel by their oral laws and demanded acceptance by all.

Jesus began each subject with the statement: "Ye have heard that it hath been said...but I say unto you...." He introduces each subject as such because he was providing clarity and insight to the Scriptures and correcting the wrong concepts introduced by the Pharisees. Had his concern been only the former, he would have said, "You have read or heard by Moses or in the Law...."

Dealing with Others

Matthew 5:21 and 22

DECREASING	INCREASING
Murder	Court
Anger	Court
Good-for-nothing	Supreme court
Fool [raca]	Fiery hell

Jesus is the master communicator and used many effective techniques to paint mind pictures of the truths he taught. Examples, comparisons, stories, fables, props, history, contrasts, and parables are some methods he employed. In the record at hand, he uses a figure of speech which exaggerates to bring home a very important point.

"Raca" – This is a term of reproach used among Jews in the time of Christ. It means senseless, empty-headed, or fool.

"Hell" is the place of the future punishment called "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire." This was originally the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned (a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction).

"Anger" - The crafty deception we face is thinking that ungodly thoughts and actions are justified because of someone or something outside of ourselves. The hate, anger, and lack of forgiveness in our lives come from within and have absolutely nothing to do with anyone or anything outside of ourselves. We are angry because we allow it, not because of someone who has made himself our enemy. Our anger is due to our thoughts, not someone else's thoughts or actions.

Psalms 37:7-9; Proverbs 15:1, 18; 16:32; 27:4

Ephesians 4:31 - "Wrath" - *thumos* - an outburst of anger; "Anger" - *orgé* - mental state of anger

Ephesians 4:26 - "Angry" - Deal with your mental anger quickly before you sin. (*orgizo*) *orgé*

"Thou fool" James 3:3-8

Deal with It Quickly

Matthew 5:23 and 24 - If your brother has something against you, it is your responsibility to deal with it. Do not be deceived into thinking you can have a healthy relationship with God while having a contentious relationship with others that is your fault.

1 John 2:8-11; 4:20 and 21 - We cannot determine how a brother responds to our attempts of reconciliation, but we absolutely can (and must) determine our own thoughts and actions.

The word "stumble" is the Greek word *skandalon* which literally means the trigger of a trap on which the bait is placed and which when touched by the animal, springs shut causing entrapment. *Skandalon* is also translated snare, trap, and offense. The parable of the sower and the seed reveals that offenses are one of the two primary ways in which the devil takes believers out. Belittling or disparaging words and anger offend people. When someone is offended, he becomes snared in Satan's trap. An offended one is tempted to react with similar, ungodly behavior. The response can be returning evil speaking and reacting in anger, both of which are sin. The offended one may be baited into canvassing, division, strife, separation, isolation, and eventually walking away from the family of God and from God Himself.

Matthew 5:25 and 26 - If you do not deal quickly, there will be greater and greater ramifications. The consequences grow as you postpone dealing with negative situations in your life.

Proverbs 6:1-5; Luke 12:58 and 59 - If you have wronged someone, have the courage to deal with it straight up, immediately. Honesty and courage go a long way.

Do What is Necessary

Matthew 5:27 and 28 - A matter of heart Luke 6:43-45
Adultery, like all sins, begins with a thought.

Matthew 5:29 and 30 - That Jesus Christ does not wish us to mutilate our bodies is perfectly clear. We know from verse 28 sin is an issue of the heart, not the eyes or hand.

These verses are a figure of speech called "hyperbole" or exaggeration. "Hyperbole" is to enlarge the truth communicated in order to heighten the sense. The emphatic exhortation is to avoid and remove everything and anything that causes us to stumble [*skandalon*]. Being cast into hell is also a part of this figure. Hyperbole was also used in verses 21 and 22.

The right eye is the most prized possession. The right hand is the hand of blessing. Whatever we see that causes us to stumble must go. Whatever we do that causes us to stumble must go.

Matthew 18:1-9 - "Foot" is added. Wherever we go that causes us to stumble, we should stop going.

The most important reality of our lives is to maintain pure hearts so we can "see God." Anything and everything which causes us to stumble from this should be dismissed in our lives. The purity of our hearts so that we can have holiness of life must be our primary concern always. No sacrifice is too great when it comes to maintaining the purity of our hearts. Cost what it will, involve what it may, the heart must be preserved because all other things in our lives are based on it.

Divorce

Matthew 5:31 and 32 - In the first year in the wilderness, God gave Moses the commandments, and divorce was not considered. In the last month of the fortieth year in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 1:3), the law of divorcement was given. Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Matthew 19:3-6; Genesis 2:24 - The original plan began with Adam and Eve: "...they shall be one flesh." Although throughout the Old Testament we see those who had more than one wife and some who did divorce, the original plan was "they shall be one flesh." The behavior of people is not the standard for truth. Those who did not adhere to this truth did suffer consequences.

Matthew 19:7 and 8 - The reason for the writing of divorcement was the "hardness of your hearts." Again, we see the heart is the main thing. To have a successful Christian marriage, maintain a pure heart. Divorce will never be an issue for those who take heed to the teaching Jesus gave. When our hearts are right, the outer relationships will be right also. When both the husband and wife have pure hearts, they have a great marriage.

Matthew 19:9 - When you make a comparative study of the following Scriptures, you can gain a clear understanding of what adultery is: Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:13-18; Romans 7:1-3; Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

Matthew 5:32 - There is a clear distinction between adultery and fornication. Both words are used two ways in the Scriptures: improper human relationships and improper spiritual relationships with God.

"Adultery" is used exclusively regarding improper sexual relationships with married people: husband, wife, and/or the third party.

James 4:1-4 - When God metaphorically refers to His people as being married to Him, the term "adultery" is used referring to improper spiritual relationship to Him.

"Fornication" is used primarily for improper sexual relationships for unmarried people and sometimes for married people.

"Fornication" is also used many times for improper spiritual relationship to God when God's people go whoring after other gods rather than faithfully loving the one true God (Exodus 34:15 and 16; Leviticus 17:7 devils; Leviticus 20:5 Molech; Leviticus 20:6 familiar spirits, wizards; Numbers 15:39 after your own heart; Numbers 25:1-5 Baal-peor and 1 Corinthians 10:8; Judges 8:27 ephod; Judges 8:33 Baalim; 2 Kings 9:22 witchcraft; Psalm 106:39 with their own inventions; Isaiah 23:15-17 with all the kingdoms of the world; Jeremiah 3:1ff with many lovers; Ezekiel 6:9 their idols; Ezekiel 16:1ff idols, everyone that passed by, Egyptians, Assyrians, Hosea 4:1ff; Acts 15:20,29; 21:25; 1 Corinthians 6:13ff; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Matthew 5:32 - The Lord spoke of fornication, not adultery, as being the cause for divorce. Considering the context of verses 27 and 28, he most likely is not speaking of improper sexual relationships, but a spouse who is actively whoring after other gods. Considering the context of Jesus' teaching on the heart, why he would say this is very understandable. Many records are in the Word regarding those who loved other gods and ill-effected their spouses to turn from the true God. The most notable people in the Scripture are Ahab and Jezebel.

Do you have an issue with anger? If so, what steps are you willing to take to change?

Do you have an unresolved problem with someone? If so, how are you going to resolve it?

Have you suffered the consequences of not dealing with a problem quickly? Do you currently have something that should be addressed?

Is there something that you are looking at, doing, or a place that you are going that must be eliminated?

Resist not Evil

Jesus' words are radical and revolutionary. His instructions on how to live are completely opposite to what most think and do. Yet, these truths are the very keys to unlock a life of godliness in the midst of an evil world.

Oaths

Matthew 5:33-37 - An oath is a solemn, formal calling upon God to witness that one sincerely intends to do what he says.

Numbers 30:2; Ecclesiastes 5:2-5 - According to the Law, if you made an oath or a vow unto God, you were not to break it. You were bound by your oath. You were under no obligation to make a vow. It would be better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

Jesus said, do not swear at all! Let your yea be yea, and let your nay be nay.

James 4:13-17 - We cannot control the future. Do not make promises that may be impossible for you to keep. Live today! Oaths deceive us into putting off until tomorrow obligations of today.

James 5:12 - Oaths can put you into condemnation.

Eye for Eye

Matthew 5:38 and 39 - At first glance, resist not evil seems to be confusing, illogical, and contradictory to God's Word. However, it is simple, logical, and life changing.

When someone attacks you with the intent of harming you, it seems as if he or she is trying to push you away, but in reality the evil pulls us in like a giant magnet.

Resist
Not
Evil

"Smite thee on thy right cheek" In the oriental culture, to touch the cheek of another man was a very great insult. The essence of what is being said here is that if someone insults us, we are not to respond in kind. Let him do it again.

The normal course of action is if someone insults us, we insult him. When we do, then we are pulled in and reduced to his evil level.

Getting people to resist evil is how the devil encourages evil in the world to proliferate. Evil multiplies as a forest fire does — rapidly and out of control.

Matthew 5:40 - The example given is the coat and cloak, not our life, home, livelihood, etc. If we go to law to argue over our coat, we will become a part of the evil.

We live in an evil world and, if our concern is justice rather than godliness, we will be drowned in evil.

1 Peter 2:13-17 - The ordinances of man are not always right, just, or equitable. As long as the ordinances of man are not causing us to break the commandments of God, we should submit.

1 Peter 2:21-23 - The example given us to follow is Christ's response to evil. What were his thoughts when he was hanging on the tree? "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

Romans 12:17-21 - The pure-hearted do not respond to evil with evil.

Matthew 5:41 and 42 - Roman soldiers could make people carry their belongings for a mile.

Love Thy Neighbor

Matthew 5:43-48

Publicans were the worst in their society, and even they figured out how to care for their own.

Believers loving believers is as easy as it gets. What about the so-called unlovable?

Love is not a technique. It is to be the way we are, the fabric of our lives! Our love is to be single, not with hypocrisy, not with partiality.

Our love of people originates from God and not from the people themselves. I love you because God first loved me. God loved us; therefore, we love each other. I do not love you because you love me! My loving you has nothing to do with what you do or do not do. It does have everything to do with having a pure heart! The heart of God is to love everybody.

It takes a lot of trust and confidence in God to believe that His way of life is better than the way we have lived on our own! His way is far superior!

We are too important to get caught up in the trivia of evil. If we endeavor to go toe to toe with evil, we are going to lose. We are not equipped! We are equipped to love! What we lose in responding to evil is our peaceful relationship with God and purity of heart!

Ephesians 5:1 and 2 - Imitators of God — love

Luke 6:27-36 - The way to resist not evil is to walk in love.

Love
Takes
Courage

Luke 6:37 and 38 - The reward now and in the future is abundant.

Ephesians 3:14-21

Have you ever made oaths that you have not kept? What was the consequence?

Do you understand the concept of resist not evil? Explain it.

Whom do you need to bless and love that has been your enemy?

Avoid Hypocrisy/Prayer

God wants heart, not detached religious activity. "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26). The Word of God clearly states the outward actions that God expects — live lovingly, be kind, work, give, serve others, and such. However, robotic obedience to these commandments, without the inward heart directed toward God, is vain. Others can see the outward actions, but the directing of the heart is done in the privacy of the mind. We may fool others and even ourselves but never God. He sees the heart, and His vision is not impaired by outward activities. To observe His ways without giving Him our heart is hypocrisy and thus is not acceptable to God.

Christians are constantly tempted with hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is feigning or pretending to be what one is not. A hypocrite is a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion.

Genuine Service

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 - Righteous acts can be done without love which may impress others but not God.

James 1:22-27 - Loving intentions must be accompanied with loving actions. God wants both — heart and actions.

Matthew 6:1 - Some texts have "alms" in place of "righteousness." Righteousness is acting in accordance with God's Word.

We must guard our minds to avoid slipping into deeds done for the acceptance or recognition of man. If we serve for man's reward, that is all we get. To serve the right way takes deliberate, disciplined action. We must continually ask ourselves, "Why am I doing this? Is this what God wants? Is this directed toward God? Does God get the glory or do I? Why am I doing what I am doing? Is this about me?"

Prayer

Matthew 6:5 and 6 - The very first thing that Jesus taught about prayer was not to be a hypocrite. Praying is an act of worship or devotion to God which must be presented with a genuine pure heart. Prayer is never to be used for the attention or adoration of men.

Verses 7 and 8 - Prayers are not to be conducted in a mechanical, mindless fashion.

Repetition itself is not the concern, rather vain repetition which is much talking without concern or thought for that which is being said.

Verse 9 - "Our Father" - Our prayers are not to some remote, uncaring, and untouchable deity, rather to the ever present, always loving, and approachable **Father**.

"Who is in heaven" - Directs our attention to the utter magnificence and might of the One Who is our Father. Our Father is the Creator of the heavens and earth and everything therein.

Deuteronomy 10:14

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S [Yahweh's] your God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

Isaiah 40:12

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

"Hallowed be thy name" - "Hallowed" means to sanctify, to render or acknowledge as holy.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

Revelation 4:8

And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

1 Peter 3:15 - He is to be sanctified in our hearts.

Psalms 46:10 - He will be sanctified in all the earth.

We must approach this Holy God with a pure, holy attitude, not vain repetitions or mindless words.

Matthew 6:10 - When the Kingdom comes, then His will only will be done on earth.

Matthew 6:11 - Each day, we are to pray this prayer. We are to live each day without being distracted by the past or future. The only day we have is today. We are not told to pray for tomorrow's bread today (Matthew 6:34).

Daily bread includes the necessities in the physical realm and, more importantly, whatever is needed in the spiritual.

Matthew 6:12 - We are told to ask God for His forgiveness at least daily.

1 John 1:9 - God is willing to forgive; however, He insists that we also forgive others.

Matthew 6:14; Ephesians 4:32 - Forgiving others is not optional if we want God to forgive us.

Matthew 6:13

Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

2 Peter 2:9

The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the Day of Judgment,

Luke 11:1-13 - This is a similar prayer and additional information on the subject.

Other prayers written after our Lord's ascension that are significant to pray are recorded in Ephesians 1:17-ff; 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; and Ephesians 6:18-20.

Fasting

Matthew 6:16 - Fasting is the abstaining or limiting of food or drink for a certain amount of time.

Psalm 35:13

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Fasting, at times, accompanied the heart's desire of total humility before God and complete and utter focus upon God, His guidance, instruction, and deliverance for oneself and for others.

Joel 2:12-14; Isaiah 58:1-72

The right motivation in fasting is to seek help in living God's Word and will.

Do you have an area of life that must be changed to avoid hypocrisy?

Have you experienced any hypocrisy in your prayer life?

How can you improve your prayer life?

Kingdom First; Strait Gate

Treasure in Heaven

Matthew 6:19-21 - Our treasure is that which we deem to be most important, that on which we place great value. Jesus is again dealing with the heart, the innermost part of man's being, and the core of man where his real motives are harbored. We are instructed not to value highly the things of the world, but to invest our time and heart into the things of God. Nothing can rob us of the treasure in heaven since these are stored up with God. However, the greatest treasure and valuables in the world are subject to depreciation and theft!

**God
is
Our Treasure**

Luke 6:43-45 - Our true treasure is that on which we are spending our lives. That which is inside governs what happens on the outside, but everything on the inside is determined by what we let in. If we want godly things to come out of our hearts, we must put godly things into our hearts. We have to guard and monitor our hearts.

Proverbs 23:5-7

Where our treasure is our hearts are, and where our hearts are our lives are, and that makes us who we are. If our treasure is in the things of God, then the things of God will be in our hearts and manifested in our lives. Love, joy, peace, etc. will be emanating from our hearts freely.

**Lay Up
Treasure
in
Heaven**

Psalms 49:6-13; 1Timothy 6:3-12 - If we live for now, now is all we get!

Colossians 3:1-10 - Set your affection on things above.

Matthew 13:44-46 - The Kingdom of God shall be our treasure.

Single Eye

Matthew 6:22 and 23

“Clear” comes from the Greek word *haplous* meaning simple or single. When our eye is single (focused on one thing), we will see one thing. If our main focus is God and the things of God, then God will be in and manifested from our lives.

The “eye” symbolizes spiritual perception. Whatever we give our attention to is the thing that governs our lives. Attention is the key! Our free will lies in the direction of our attention. Whatever we steadfastly direct our attention to will come into our lives and dominate us.

If we direct our attention to the outer world, which is constantly shifting and changing, we are bound to have frustration, disappointment, and heartache. In contrast, if we will direct our attention to God and desire to glorify God in doing His will, then our eye is single and our whole body, or embodiment, will be full of light.

Galatians 6:3, 7 and 8 - Whatsoever we sow, we reap.

Cannot Serve Two Masters

Matthew 6:24 - The word “wealth” is from the Greek *mamonas* – a comprehensive word for all kinds of possessions, earnings, and gain (the god of materialism).

We cannot serve God and the world. However, the devil gets people to think that they can. It is a deception. God wants our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. If we give our lives to God, we will get life! If we try to keep our own lives and ways, we will lose our lives.

When we sell out to God, we have the power of God and deliverance.

Ephesians 6:5 and 6 - Slaves (*doulos*) - one who makes the freewill choice to commit himself out of love to serve the master with attentiveness and singleness of heart.

We are not victims of circumstance. What someone else does to us is not the issue; the issue is what we allow in our hearts.

Luke 16:13-15 - God knows your heart.

Matthew 6:25-33 - Do not be worried or anxious or troubled with cares (6:25, 27 and 28, 31, and 34).

Matthew 6:34 - Do not be mentally distracted about tomorrow. We get robbed of the blessings of today by worrying about tomorrow.

We can plan for tomorrow without worrying. We give it to God, ask Him to help us with it, and then think the best concerning that situation today.

James 4:13-17 - Sufficient is the evil to contend with today, never mind tomorrow. To keep our focus, our treasure, our eyes singly on God today is enough!

What is your true treasure? How do you know?

What must be eliminated from your life so that your eye is single?

Do you worry about tomorrow? How can you develop more faith in God regarding tomorrow?

The Strait Gate

We are a part of the body of Christ which is an interdependent family relationship. The world is too evil, and we are too weak to walk alone. We need each other in order to stay faithful until Christ returns. Loving service to each other is characterized by the following commands: TEACH, EXHORT, WARN, REPROVE, REBUKE, RESTORE. However, to obey these commands, the beatitudes must be lived in our own lives. Humility, mourning, meekness, compassion, etc. equip us to help others and without them, we will become judgmental, condescending, and harsh.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Judge Not

Matthew 7:1-5 - The carnal tendency of man is to have 20/20 eyesight to see faults in others but blindness to their own faults. Being judgmental must give us a sense of importance or superiority.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD [Yahweh] said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

God is the only one qualified to judge men because He sees the heart. We do not!

Romans 2:1-3 - Our perspective is very, very limited and quite often our perceptions of people, circumstances, and situations are wrong. Whenever we measure out self-determined harsh judgments of others, we become the sinner and will receive the judgment of God.

Romans 14:1 [Living Bible]

Give a warm welcome to any brother who wants to join you, even though his faith is weak. Don't criticize him for having different ideas from yours about what is right and wrong.

Phillips Modern English

Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples.

Romans 14:2 and 3 - God has not appointed any of us to scrutinize and pronounce judgment on any of His children.

Verse 4 - We are all servants of God. We all stand approved of God for He is over all. We do not have the right to judge God's servants. God is the one who has called each of us, and He is the one who enables each of us to stand.

Verses 10-13 - We must be concerned about conducting our own lives so as not to be a stumbling block to cause the fall of a brother.

Verses 14-17 - The Kingdom of God is most important.

Matthew 7:15 - We must judge what the prophets are saying to decide if it is right to believe (Acts 20:29-31; 1 John 4:1).

Some people believe everything they read and hear. Unfortunately, many things printed and taught are not true. We should be meek but not gullible. Two extremes to avoid are a reckless open-mindedness and a stubborn narrow-mindedness.

We have the responsibility to verify every message we receive, even if the person speaking claims it is of God.

Matthew 7:1 and 2 - With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you. Everything that we do to others will sooner or later be done to us by someone, somewhere.

Luke 6:34-38 - Give and it shall be given.

Dog and Swine Feeding

Matthew 7:6 - Not everyone is willing to receive God's Word. The humble and meek are qualified. God honors freewill; therefore, we are to do so also.

Matthew 13:10-13 - Follow the way Jesus Christ conducted his ministry.

Giving the Word when it is not wanted will not get godly results. You may do more harm than good to the person and to yourself. Do not cast your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.

If you give the Word to someone who is not hungry, he will not manifest the results. When he is hungry, he may think that he already tried it and that it did not work. So, he may not come back to God.

No matter how important this other person is to you, forcing the Word on him may well cause more harm than good.

James 1:5-8 - Ask God for wisdom.

Ask, Seek, Knock

Matthew 7:7-11 - Mind your own business and trust God.

Luke 11:5-8 - Be persistent in prayer and your focus on God, not people.

Luke 18:1-8 - Asking, seeking, and knocking

Matthew 7:12 - Because we know that we can go to God and rely on Him, we can treat people with the love of God. We do this not because we are going to get something from them, but because He tells us to love other people.

Matthew 7:13 - Jesus Christ is the only door of salvation through which man must walk to enter the Kingdom of God. If he is our Lord, we must obey his commands.

Strait is the Gate

Matthew 7:14 - Jesus' conclusions seem radical, hard to take, and contrary to the commonly accepted belief. However, his teaching is not radical or contrary to what the prophets and apostles taught. He taught God's will.

Jesus was, and is, God's way to provide eternal life for mankind. Jesus communicated in many illustrative ways that he was the source of life. He told Nicodemus, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:15). He declared to the multitude that he was the bread of life (John 6:35). To the disciples in the temple, he put forth that he is the light of life (John 8:12). As the good shepherd and the door to the sheepfold, he stated his destiny was to lay down his life for the sheep. He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). To reassure grieving Martha, he stated, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

Only through him can a man attain life in the age to come. We must believe on him to receive this gift.

John 6:40

"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

False Prophets

Matthew 7:15-20 - The fruit that should be visible has been described in the sermon.

Jude 1:1-25; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-22

False prophets say things people want to hear and lead people away from God and that which is necessary to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 7:20 - What fruit will indicate that he is a true prophet? His teaching will agree with the Lord's, and his life will be the mirror of the Sermon on the Mount.

Obedience

Matthew 7:21-23 - Jesus did not say their works or words were wrong. To do these things, they would have to have the spirit, but they were not obeying the commandments of God or the things which Jesus spoke. The works that Jesus has spoken in the teaching do not include signs, wonders, and miracles because they are to follow those who obey his words. What is spoken in this teaching is humility, mourning, meekness, mercy, purity of heart, peace makers, loving, forgiveness, genuine deeds of compassion, genuine prayer, genuine fasting, not being involved with this world, living completely for God, seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, not judging, asking, seeking, knocking, doing to others the things you want others to do to you. Make no mistake, these are the things God wants us to do (with a genuine heart of loving obedience to Him) that are required to enter into the Kingdom of God.

"Lord" means one having power and authority over others, a ruler that has preeminence to whom service and obedience are due. If we believe that Jesus is Lord, we must obey.

Faith and Obedience are Always Companions

Romans 10:1-3 - Rather than obeying the knowledge of God, they determined their own beliefs. Strait and narrow is the way to life.

Verses 4-8 - This is quoted from Deuteronomy 30.

Romans 10:9 and 10 - The requirement is very intimidating when we consider our own abilities. However, these statements should jolt our minds back to the beginning of the sermon. Humility is the acknowledgment and belief that we are not sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. We are to have a total dependency and reliance upon God, an acknowledgment of our need for Him and His ways.

Philippians 1:9-11 - "Approve" here means discern.

Matthew 7:24-29 - There will be many floods, winds, etc., both for those who have faith and those who do not. Yet, for those who are doing His Word, they will not fall. Also, we are told at the end of this age there will be storms such have never been seen before. Those who have built their house upon obedience to his Word shall stand, and all others will fall.

Ephesians 2:8-10 - The way into the Kingdom of God is strait and narrow. Few there are that find it. If Jesus is our Lord, we obey his commands. However, entrance into the gate will be only because of the grace of God. No one is good enough to receive eternal life. The heart of Christian living is not a method for man to work his way into the Kingdom.

Matthew 6:9-13 - The teachings of our Lord are not really complicated. They are easy to understand, howbeit challenging to our ungodly ways of living. What he presents is superior living, and, by all means, you are able to live this way! As you walk, God will help you. Sinless perfection is not our aim, but loving obedience so that our God may be glorified by our walks.

Have you been guilty of judging others? What has been the result of this wrong action?

What areas of your life must change in order to better your walk with God?

How can you determine if someone is a false prophet?

What does it mean to have Jesus as Lord? What must change in order to accept the Lordship of Christ more fully?

—Appendix One—

Appendix One

The Heart of the Matter - Resist Not Evil

The very important life skills Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount are often missed due to extreme and inaccurate interpretations. His instruction to “resist not evil” is a classic example and the subject of this article. Jesus used comparisons to provide clarity and understanding about the new insight he was providing. Five times he said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said....But I say unto you," (Matthew 5:21, 27, 33, 38, and 43). In order for one to grasp the contrasts fully, it is valuable to understand that which he referenced from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Matthew 5:38-42

You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'

But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

The phrase of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" is written in three different books in the Old Testament: Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; and Deuteronomy 19:21. A careful examination of these verses in their context reveals that this phrase is dealing with the principle of proportionate retribution and compensation (a just punishment and restitution for wrong deeds). Jesus was not saying that proportionate retribution was evil, for to do so would be criticism of God. That which is written in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy was inspired by God and given to Moses so that Israel could be governed by a theocracy. Jesus never condemned this principle or any other which was written in the Mosaic Law; rather, he provided additional insight.

The intention of the principle of proportionate retribution was not to sanction revenge, but to prevent the excess of evil and crime. Every society has to have these laws (or something similar), in order to survive because of the evil nature of man and Satan’s influence upon this age. When Jesus rules the world in the Millennial Kingdom, Satan will be locked in chains. Even then, Jesus will rule using these same principles, except he will do so perfectly (read Isaiah 11:1-4).

Indeed, Jesus is not condemning this principle as evil, nor is he setting forth a purporting of non-violent resistance, as it is often interpreted. What he is setting forth, using four examples, is how a disciple is not to retaliate with evil even though it is his personal or legal right to do so. The evil to which Jesus is referring is declared in each of the four examples: 1) someone insults you (verse 39), 2) someone unjustly sues you for your personal belongings (verse 40), 3) governmental

abuses (verse 41), and 4) someone asks of you or tries to borrow from you (verse 42). All of these examples deal with an individual's response to another's wrongdoing directed at him or her.

Each situation describes an infringement upon a person's rights or privileges. The natural tendency of the violated one is to react in a defensive or aggressive way. In their society, and ours also, they could invoke the principle of proportionate retribution by going to the law enforcers.

In the first scenario, the person "slaps you on your right cheek." The situation is one of insult rather than of physical violence. A blow such as this to an Eastern person in Jesus' day was a sign of extreme contempt — the highest insult. Such an act was punishable, according to the Talmud (the authoritative body of Jewish tradition), by a very heavy fine. Therefore, what Jesus is opposing here is not brutality or even physical retaliation but the principle of insisting on commensurate, legitimate retribution. "Even though it is your right to do so, let it go!" Jesus is teaching us to have a willingness to surrender personal and legal rights that interfere with your walk with God.

Willingness to Surrender Personal and Legal Rights

The second example is recorded in verse 40 and instructs the proper response to someone eager for litigation which would deprive the disciple of his personal items — his coat. In Exodus 22:26 and 27, Moses specifically deals with the right that each person has regarding this very matter. Yet, Jesus is setting forth a radically unselfish attitude that surrenders one's rights and property. Rather than getting involved in the law of compensation, give the person even more than he is trying to extort — give him your cloak as well.

The third example, recorded in verse 41 has to do with the Roman soldiers' practice of commandeering civilian labor in an occupied country. According to Roman law, they had the right to make a civilian carry their belongings for one mile. The Judeans fiercely resented such impositions for they violated their "God-given, inalienable rights." Instead of resisting, resenting, or retaliating, Jesus' instruction was extreme: "Go two miles!"

The last representation addresses an attitude of unselfish concern for others that goes beyond what is normal. Jesus' disciples are not to be concerned with that which is rightfully their own but rather are to be concerned with sharing and caring for others.

The normal response to the evil assaults that Jesus described is to fight back, to resist evil by pleading our case for proportionate retribution. Whenever our personal rights are threatened or violated, the natural tendency is to defend and even attack back. Therefore, what Jesus demands is indeed radical and even revolutionary. His instructions on how to live were, and are, completely opposite to what most think and do. However, his teaching provides the only way to live above the evil influences of this current age and to enter into the Kingdom of God.

If we busy ourselves with justice when we have been violated, our lives will be swallowed up with the affairs of this life. Often, when a person is concerned about just retribution, he is tempted also to engage in many ungodly attitudes. Pride, anger, bitterness, hate, and revenge are some of the sins that people bent on justice fall into. Jesus tells us to live above all of this by not being concerned about our rights, but rather by living in obedience to him and looking for the coming Kingdom.

Jesus' instruction is completely opposite to what most think and do. The right interpretation and application of our Lord's teaching are very important and require the wisdom of God. The way that Jesus interpreted and applied the Hebrew Scriptures compared to the overly religious, wrong ways provides an excellent example for us to follow. The religious leaders such as the Pharisees seemed very concerned with rightly understanding and applying the Law of Moses. They often confronted Jesus for not strictly obeying it. When his disciples picked corn on the Sabbath, they said, "Why do you that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days?" When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, they were there to point out the violation of the Law. When Jesus ate with publicans and sinners, the Pharisees criticized him because it was contradictory to their interpretation of the Law.

The religionists based their criticism upon their understanding of what is written in the Law. Indeed, these things were written, but the way that they interpreted them was legalistic and extreme. They missed the truth and heart of what was written. Jesus never broke the Law, yet he also understood the heart and correct application of it.

If we have a pharisaical approach to our Lord's teaching that is extreme and legalistic, then we, too, will wrongly understand and apply it. If we mold these four examples into extreme, pragmatic rules, we will miss our Lord's point and cause serious problems for ourselves.

An extreme, legalistic application of giving to everyone who asks of us would render Christians to be poverty-stricken. Many times, giving to others who ask enables them not to do what they should do or to continue with what they should not. God's wisdom is needed in each situation. He said not to turn away those who want to borrow. However, elsewhere we are instructed that lending to others can cause strife and division. Like Jesus did with the Law of Moses, so must we do with his teachings! What is the heart of that which he is communicating?

Extreme legalistic interpretation of Jesus' teachings miss the mark.

Submitting to the demands of a Roman soldier is not the same as blind obedience to every demand a government may impose. Surely, Jesus was not instructing us to obey authorities that demand actions contrary to God's will. Such an interpretation is extreme and misses the heart of his instruction. We need to think and ask God for wisdom in each situation.

Allowing someone to have our coat and cloak to avoid litigation is not the same as submitting to the demands of someone endeavoring to extort your home or livelihood. He is not saying surrender your legal rights every time you are challenged. Many times, it is expedient to do so,

but not necessarily all the time. For the furtherance of the gospel, Paul surrendered his legal rights as a Roman citizen and endured many stripes and imprisonment, recorded in Acts 16. However, in the same occurrence, he also claimed his rights as a Roman citizen for the furtherance of the gospel.

Another time when confronted with a similar beating (recorded in Acts 27), he claimed his rights and prevented the scourging. In Acts 25:8-12, we see again he used his citizenship rights to accommodate his journey to Rome. Paul understood the heart of what Jesus taught and was not legalistic or extreme. He obviously depended upon God's wisdom in each situation.

Forfeiting personal rights when insulted is not the same as allowing oneself to be brutally beaten without self-defense. Yet, a pharisaical interpretation of this verse causes some to think that Christians are never to use self-defense, regardless of the consequences. Jesus is not talking about self-defense but rather the willingness to surrender our personal and legal rights for proportionate retribution when we are insulted. Nor is he saying that every time someone insults you that you "take it on the chin" without defending yourself. He often defended himself when he was attacked by the religionists. Read the heated discourse recorded in John 8. The Pharisees implied that Jesus was born of fornication. His response was, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." His response was not rooted in hate, bitterness, revenge, or any other evil motivation. What he said, in his own defense, was true. Our Lord was never a doormat for the cruel critics to walk all over. He stood up for himself and defended himself by speaking the truth.

In the epistles, Paul often writes apologetics which are a systematic, argumentative discourse in defense. To conclude from Jesus' exhortation that to turn the other cheek means never to use self-defense is an extreme and legalistic interpretation we want to avoid. The heart of the matter is to have a loving attitude which is willing to surrender personal rights in order to stay unencumbered with this evil age. The Lord's life is our example of how to apply the things that he asks of his disciples.

—Appendix Two—

Appendix Two

Our Lord's Message

Powerful, radical, confrontational, life changing, and freeing are all words which describe the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. A careful comparison of his communications alongside that which is commonly taught today in his name reveals a shocking surprise. The essence of his message has been obscured (if not completely lost); the substance of which can be summarized under the heading: the Kingdom of God. From his first teaching, called the Sermon on the Mount, until the day he ascended into heaven, he consistently maintained the same theme in his preaching and teaching, that which he called the Gospel of the Kingdom. Two short sentences in the Lord's prayer summarize the whole of the Kingdom of God. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Today, man's will, not God's, is being done on earth.

For the many times that Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God, he never once defined it. Equally surprising is that none of those who heard him ever asked for an explanation. Jesus spoke as if everyone already understood the Kingdom, and indeed they did. The knowledge regarding it was common to every Israelite for it was the hope for which they desperately waited, and had done so for centuries. To us, on the contrary, it is a strange term and an unknown concept. Since it is fundamental for understanding the message of our Lord, we must gain clarity. A good starting point is acknowledging man's need for God's Kingdom. Many scriptures declare the depravity of humanity, but none so descriptively and concisely as those in the epistle of Romans.

Romans 3:10-18

...There is none righteous, no, not one:

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:

Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:

Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:

And the way of peace have they not known:

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This representation of mankind is not consistent with the way in which he was originally created. In the beginning he was in the image or likeness of God.

Genesis 1:26-28

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

God's original plan was for man to have dominion over a perfect world. He created Adam and Eve in His image, enabling them to have sovereignty upon the earth under His supreme and absolute authority. In this original perfect environment and in his original perfect state, mankind would have had a loving harmonious life with God and each other forever. Sin, hate, contentions, sorrow, sickness, and death were nonexistent in the Garden of Eden. Godliness, love, peace, joy, health, and life flourished and would have forever.

However, after being enticed by the serpent, Adam and Eve made the decision to disobey God's direct command. The consequences of their choice were cataclysmic, affecting every aspect of creation. Their dominion was greatly diminished, the earth was corrupted, and their harmonious relationships were tarnished with enmity and contention. Sin enveloped mankind as Satan became the god of this age and, as such, the primary influencing agent upon humanity. Their immortality was replaced with death.

The fall of man indeed destroyed God's original plan, but by no means deterred God from His purpose. Immediately after the fall, God set in motion the plan to redeem man and restore the earth to its paradise state. As the Scriptures progress, this plan becomes its main theme which is called by our Lord, Jesus Christ, THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

As the book of Genesis explains what happened in the beginning, the book of Revelation foretells what will happen in the end. God's Kingdom will come, and His will shall be done on earth just as it is in heaven. Adam and Eve were cast out of paradise and restrained from eating from the tree of life. Their paradise was completely destroyed with the flood in the time of Noah. However, God promises that paradise and the tree of life will come again.

Revelation 2:7

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The righteous will regain dominion over God's recreated earth. Man's relationship with God will be like it was before the fall: holy, loving, harmonious, and completely unfettered by sin. The righteous will live forever with the Lord Jesus Christ and God on the paradise-like earth.

Revelation 21:1-4

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The beginning understanding of the Kingdom of God is found with the patriarch Abraham.

God made a covenant with Him that has impact upon all those who have faith. God made many promises to this man, some of which have been fulfilled, others which will be when the Kingdom comes. God initiated the relationship with Abram (later He changed his name to Abraham) while he lived in Mesopotamia. His instructions were specific — leave your country, relatives, father's house and go to the land I will show you. God promised the following:

Genesis 12:2 and 3

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 him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Abram obeyed God and departed, hence began their relationship which later was characterized by God when He said, "Abraham my friend." No one else is called the friend of God! As Abraham grew in his faith and commitment, so did God's commitment and promises. God extended Himself to Abraham in an extraordinary way. He made promises to him and his seed which extended into the everlasting. To seal the promises, God made a covenant of blood with him which absolutely ensured that His promises would be fulfilled. After Abraham demonstrated his faith by obeying God to the degree of offering the life of his son Isaac, God committed Himself in a remarkably unique way. He swore to Himself that He would keep the promises made to Abraham. At no other time does God give the threefold guarantee of: promise, covenant, and swearing. A thorough investigation of Genesis 12 through 22 will provide a comprehensive view of all the promises made. We have already noted that God first promised to make a great nation of him. As the Scriptures progressively develop, what becomes apparent is that Israel is this promised nation. However, what was not so obvious for many years is that God also promises that nations would come from Abram. As a matter of fact, the name change from Abram to Abraham reflects this additional promise. "Abraham" means father of many nations.

Genesis 17:5

Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations [gowy] have I made thee.

The Hebrew word "gowy" is translated into English as either "nation" or "Gentiles." Even today Jewish people use the word "goy" to refer to anyone who is not of Israel. God revealed to the Apostle Paul that which was a mystery for centuries — that God had always intended to include the Gentiles as heirs of the promises made to Abraham. (Israel always considered Abraham to be their Father.) However Paul revealed that the true children of Abraham are those of faith from both Israel (the circumcision) and the Gentiles (uncircumcision). Those who have the same faith as Abraham are considered to be his children.

Romans 4:11 and 12, 16

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.

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,

Abraham is the father to all those who believe. God compared his seed to the dust of the earth, the innumerable stars, and the sand upon the seashores because He knew it would encompass a lot more than just the biological descendants of Israel. Israel is only one nation. The inclusion of the Gentiles made his seed to be many nations.

Galatians 3:6-9

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

When God spoke prophetically to Abraham, his seed included all those who would believe from both Israel and the Gentiles because of the accomplished work of Jesus Christ.

Verse 14

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

If we believe in Christ, then we are the seed of Abraham and heirs together of the same promises.

Verse 29

And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The faithful followers of Christ will inherit the same promises which were made to Abraham. One very important promise was regarding the land. When God first mentioned land to Abram, no specific boundaries were provided. He simply stated "this land" (Genesis 12:7). However, as time went on, the land mass expanded greatly. In the end God promised Abraham and his seed (which we now know included all those of faith) the whole world.

Romans 4:13

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

That which Adam and Eve lost and which the book of Revelation declares will come again, a total regenerated earth, was promised to Abraham and his children of faith. Israel occupied part of the land promised and did so for a relatively short period of time. However that occupation was by no means the complete fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. It did not encompass the whole world, nor did it last forever. At best it was a prototype for that which will happen when Christ returns and sets up the Kingdom of God.

Although most believe that everlasting life will be spent in heaven, the Scriptures clearly and frequently declare that Paradise on earth is the destiny of the faithful. A careful study of Jesus' teachings reveals that he taught the Kingdom of God will be on earth.

Another significant promise made to Abraham that relates to the Kingdom of God is that "kings shall come out of thee." Indeed many kings were descendants of Abraham, the most notable being David and Jesus. David's reign over Israel is set forth as the prototype for Jesus' reign over Israel and the world for the first 1,000 years after his return. David's first act as king over a united Israel was to take the city of Jerusalem and to make it the center of worship and the capital city. Moses told Israel that God had selected a special location in the promised land for His own — a place where He would be worshipped.

However when Joshua led Israel into the land, they took all the area around Jerusalem but never took the city itself. The specific place that God wanted, which would be called the city of God, was left to be occupied by pagans. For over 500 years, they did not take Jerusalem. David, a man after God's own heart took the city and proceeded to carry out God's will for His city. The very next thing that David did was to bring the ark of the covenant into the city and establish the

praise and worship that God wanted and that Israel had neglected. David appointed thousands of Levites to praise and serve the Lord. This time was called "the time of Zion" and is viewed as the sweetest relationship Israel had with God. Unfortunately it was short-lived, but it still stands as a prototype for what Jesus will do when he returns. In that day, Jesus will again take Jerusalem for God and make it His capital city for the worldwide theocracy. It will again be the city of God.

God made a covenant with David just as He had done years before with Abraham.

I Chronicles 17:11-14

And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go *to be* with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* that was before thee:

But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

The seed of David to sit upon his throne forever is Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ. When the angel told Mary about her unborn child, he declared that her child would be the one promised to David.

Luke 1:31-33

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Jesus will reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem (II Samuel 7:12-14; Psalms 132:11; Isaiah 9:6 and 7; 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5 and 6).

The Old Testament is filled with prophecies regarding the Christ. The word "Messiah" is primarily used in the Old Testament, while the word "Christ" is primarily used in the New Testament. Both words mean the same thing — the anointed one. The high priest, the prophet, and the king were all anointed and, as such, served as prototypes for the Christ. Moses (the first five books of the Old Testament) and all the prophets (the remainder of the Old Testament) spoke often regarding the Messiah. They communicated many details about that which he would do and say. Before the Messiah was born, these scriptures provided an intricate, complex blueprint so that there would be a standard to compare and determine the authenticity of the Christ. Although the four Gospels do not chronicle everything Jesus did and said, they do declare everything necessary to determine that he is the Christ. He fulfilled all that was prophesied regarding his first coming.

In that he fulfilled these prophecies proving that he is the Christ, we can have absolute confidence that he also will return and complete the rest of that which is promised regarding him. Again, much is written about his second coming. His return will mark the beginning of God's Kingdom on earth. He will ensure that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Before Jesus was resurrected and ascended into heaven, he endured the most horrific torture and death ever known to man. His suffering and death provided the substitutionary sacrifice necessary for man's redemption and salvation. Before Jesus returns again there will be a time of great suffering and death. However, he will not be the victim this time. The 3½ years before his return will be a time of great tribulation upon the whole of humanity. The earth and everyone in it will be affected.

The Christian's great hope is centered in Christ's return when the resurrection of the just will occur. In this first raising of the dead, all the believers from the past ages will be resurrected and given a new life that will be everlasting. The believers who are alive when he comes will be transformed simultaneously with the resurrected ones. When Jesus was resurrected he became the firstborn from the dead. Firstborn implies that none came before but that others will follow. The life he was given when he was raised from the dead is an example of what will be given to those in the resurrection of the just.

At this time, Jesus will begin to rule God's Kingdom on earth. He will sit on the throne of David in God's city, Jerusalem. He will rule the world on God's behalf, and all the nations will be brought into his subjection. The resurrected saints will reign with him as kings and priests and do so for 1,000 years. During this millennium, Satan will be chained in the bottomless pit, and his influence upon the world will be withheld (Revelation 20:1-6).

This time is called the regeneration because there will be a recreation of life (Matthew 19:28; Titus 3:5). The changes are going to be radical, progressive, and encompassing of everyone and everything. The undesirable and unproductive geographic features of the earth will be changed. Valleys will be exalted; mountains will be brought low (Isaiah 40:4). Deserts and wilderness will flourish with water and vegetation (Isaiah 35:7; 41:18 and 19; 43:19).

All war and the thoughts of war will cease (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). The weapons of war will be burned with fire for the first seven years after Christ returns and molded into tools of agriculture (Ezekiel 39:9). Even the animal kingdom will undergo a drastic change. Animals will be vegetarians and peacefully coexist with each other and mankind (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25). All these changes will evolve until, in the end, paradise will be established on earth.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed for a short time. He will once again deceive many and endeavor to lead an insurrection against Christ's Kingdom. However his efforts will be short lived because all those involved will be devoured by fire which comes down out of heaven from God. Then the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where he will be totally annihilated forever (Revelation 20:7-10).

At the same time, the second resurrection — the resurrection of the unjust — will happen. In this resurrection, all unbelievers from the past ages and those in the millennium kingdom will be judged. Whoever is not written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire along with death and the grave (Revelation 20:11-15).

After all of this, Jesus the Christ will deliver the Kingdom to his Father. Then God will rule over all and dwell among His people. Mankind will live with Christ and God in a new heaven and new earth. Again paradise will be established, and man will have access to the tree of life (I Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 21 and 22).

The many things that Jesus did which are recorded in the four Gospels proved that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Also contained in the Gospels, and equally as important, are the many things he said. As John the Baptist's ministry came to an end because of his imprisonment, our Lord's ministry began to flourish. The following statement spoken at the commencement of his ministry declares the recurring theme of his message.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand

He faithfully communicated the gospel of the Kingdom throughout his ministry until he ascended into heaven.

Matthew 4:23

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom....

Acts 1:3

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

However with all that he taught about the Kingdom, little emphasis was placed on the details set forth in this writing. Unlike today, everyone knew about the coming Kingdom; therefore he did not need to explain. So common was this knowledge that even men like Herod knew. Herod, the evil, unbelieving governor, understood that the Messiah was coming to reign on the throne of David and rule Israel. He was so convinced and threatened by the Messiah that he slaughtered all the children two years old and under in Bethlehem in an endeavor to eliminate him.

From the days of Abraham, for thousands of years, the Israelites looked for the fulfillment of the promise which would bring God's Kingdom to earth. Moses and all the prophets wrote concerning the Kingdom, so indeed it was commonly understood. Likewise the New Testament writers, the apostles, all spoke the same. The book of Acts ends with this summary statement regarding Paul the Apostle's ministry:

Acts 28:31

Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Paul taught the Kingdom of God with the added insight concerning our Lord Jesus in his exalted position as Christ. After he ascended into heaven, another phase of the Kingdom plan began. The time period between his ascension and his return (which is the age we live in) is called the age of grace. Today things are very different from when Jesus walked the earth or from how it will be when he returns as the King of earth. In the Old Testament, three great anointings are set forth as prototypes for Jesus the Christ (Anointed One) — the high priest, the prophet, and the king. These anointings help us to understand the relationship believers today have with Christ as we await his return.

The high priest of old served as the mediator and intercessor for the people of Israel. He offered animal sacrifices as an atonement for sins so that forgiveness could be received. The priest served in the tabernacle and, later in Solomon's time, in the temple. Jesus was anointed to be our high priest. He offered the perfect sacrifice once and for all providing eternal reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins. Today he is at God's right hand in the heavenlies, ever living to make intercession for us. He is declared to be a merciful, faithful, compassionate, high priest who runs to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:10-18; 4:14-16).

Jesus was anointed to be the great prophet which Moses said would be like him yet greater (because his words would bring salvation to those who believe). Today, the prophet Jesus speaks to us through the Word of God recorded in the Scriptures and through the holy spirit that lives within us. In the same manner in which he taught and guided his disciples, he now works in us through the spirit. Because of the spirit, Christ lives in us; therefore our prophet is ever with us (Acts 3:19-26; John 14:25 and 26; 16:13 and 14).

Jesus the anointed one will reign on the throne of David when he returns. Today, he reigns within the hearts and lives of those who obey his commands. He is our Lord and Master; therefore he governs our lives as we await his glorious return. With Christ in us, we can do all things regardless of circumstances because he provides strength. He has made us to be more than conquerors even now as we dwell in this evil age (Luke 1:30-33; Romans 8:35-39).

When we hear our Lord's message, the logical question should be, "What must I do to be a part of the Kingdom of God?" The answer is also provided in the teaching of our Lord; therefore searching the Scriptures should be of paramount concern. Peter summed it up well.

Acts 3:19-21

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:
Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.