

The **MIND**
of **CHRIST**

*Learn How to Think, Feel & See
What is Flowing from His Heart*

By **DAVID MURRY**

THE MIND OF CHRIST: *Learn How to Think, Feel & See What is Flowing from His Heart*
By David W. Murry

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Note from the Author:

About Scriptural Translations- I am a firm believer in studying the Word of God in its original Hebrew and Greek form. Many times when I am citing a passage of scripture, I will use whatever authorized version translates into English the original Hebrew/Greek word most accurately within that given verse. Also, because of this, at times a scripture cited may be quoted from one particular recognized version, but a key word taken from another recognized version in order to get the most accurate contextual translation. I encourage everyone, if a word or scripture speaks to your spirit (and they will) to go back into the Hebrew/Greek. There are several online websites that are excellent for this in addition to several free apps.

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~With Gratitude & Love~

To my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ with whom I fellowship. Your friendship and support have restored to me the courage, love and above all, hope, that His Bride will indeed come forth and answer the cry of Father's Heart.

To Beth Wilson, whose servant's heart and faithfulness (and editing skills) was integral in bringing this work to pass. She is a true blessing and a good friend of ours. We are honored to know her.

To Maija~ my most intimate ally and soul mate- who never once left my side.

Ever.

Introduction

This book is, by in large, a compilation of teachings from my blog laid out in study form.

It is a humble beginning and a modest roadmap for the weary traveler who has felt the tug that there simply must be more to our walk than we are experiencing. There is. The Bible tells us so.

These studies and topics are divided into four sections. They represent a systematic, scriptural approach toward intimacy with Him that is built precept upon precept with Christ as our vision, our passion, and above all, our Chief Cornerstone.

May the Lord touch the hearts of all who have the courage to hope for deeper intimacy with Him and dare to have the courage to walk in the mind of Christ. May the cry of our heart be, like that of our beloved brother Paul of Tarsus—

“...that I may know Him.” (Philippians 3:10)

Your brother,

David

SECTION 1

The Mind of Christ

VITAL!

In order to walk in the Mind of Christ we first must come to a spiritual understanding of what that means. Then we must take our soul (mind, will and emotions) and submit and re-shape it until we think, feel and above all, believe the very things that Jesus does. This will never be determined by where we fellowship, how we fellowship, or what programs we are involved in. This is accomplished in the inner man, alone with the Lord, where our true thoughts are laid bare before Him.

The truths laid out in this book, and many of the scriptures, will be repeated over and over in various ways.

This is deliberate.

It is an integral part of the process of our transformation to walking in our true identity in Christ.

Our walk is determined first and foremost by what we believe at any given moment. This belief system is either formed by the *entire* word of God... or it is not.

Everything we think, say and act upon is determined by what we are choosing to believe at that moment in time. Let us begin to identify our beliefs by first coming to terms with what is our final authority in our lives - The Word of God... or something else. If we decide it shall be the

written Word, only then can we begin to draw upon His Word in order to re-shape our thinking so that we are drawing upon his thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

More than anything else I implore you to take your time. Leave no stone (or more specifically, thought) un-turned. Have the courage to call upon the Holy Spirit within you to set you free in any and all areas where fear has made you a slave to lies. He came to set us free, so that we may be free indeed. Free to walk in great communion and deep fellowship with God Almighty Himself.

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23:7

Let us begin.

Chapter 1

Agreeing with His Word

"...which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

But the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

Scripture clearly tells us that we have the Mind of Christ. When we receive Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes and makes His abode in us. The Kingdom comes to live in us. (Ephesians 1:14, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 2:12, 2 Corinthians 6:16, 1 John 2:27).

There are many aspects of the reality of what this means to us as a child of the living God, but for now we need to start with the cornerstone of this reality before we can build the rest of the foundation. Here is what I want to focus on right now:

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN A NEW MIND

If we have been given the mind of Christ then that means we are to think what He thinks, feel what He feels, and ultimately do what we see Him doing from His throne-room. There is a reality and distinction that the Body of Christ needs to embrace in this age if we are going to enter into the fullness of intimacy and communion with the Bridegroom. That reality is this:

If we do not choose to find out what He says about any given topic, we cannot agree with Him, and therefore cannot walk in His mind on that subject.

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

Said another way: We can only walk in the blessing of His mind and His ways to the degree that we know what they are.

The Word says we have already been given a new mind. We have the mind of Christ now! The old man was crucified at the cross (Romans 6:6, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:15, Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:9-10).

We are dead to the old man and what Christians often erroneously call "self." We have been given the ability to perceive and agree with what God says.

The old man cannot conform. It cannot submit to the Spirit of God. It opposes it. It always will oppose the Kingdom. This is no longer who we are! We are *not* the old man. Stop trying to convert the old man... it cannot be done. We are dead to him and alive to Christ.

"The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." Romans 8:7

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you." (verse 9).

Did you receive Christ as Savior? Then you are not in the flesh anymore. So please stop saying you are.

When we are born again, we die the death that Christ dies; that is to say, we enter into His death. We partake in what He accomplished. He died so that when we receive the Holy Spirit we also die. Specifically, the old nature and sinful man dies, and we reign as new creatures in Christ with His mind. Our "self" is the new man, not the carnal man and his carnal mind. That is not who we are any longer.

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Romans 6:3

We need to embrace the reality that we are not contending with ourselves. We are contending with something we already died to- the old man. That is no longer who we are. We are made a new creation in Christ. Paul was conveying this to the believers at Rome when he said...

"...but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me." Romans 7:23

Why was the sin waging war against what Paul called "my mind?" Because Paul understood he was given a *new* mind. The law of sin (sinful man/old man) was no longer who Paul was. When Paul said "my mind" he was acknowledging the work accomplished on the cross and released in him when He received the Holy Spirit at salvation. The Body of Christ needs to stop identifying herself with the old mind and old man.

"Well, I am not sure if that was the Lord prompting me, or if it was just me."

No...

"I am not sure if that was the Lord, or if it was my flesh."

Better... How about...

"I am not sure if that was the mind of Christ that I have, possessed and walk in, OR if that was the old man trying to trip me up."

Wordy perhaps, but you get the idea and it's a good practice to use similar language until your mind is in agreement with God's Word on this reality. Now we can begin to approach some old time favorite scriptures with a more complete and accurate understanding of how to apply them to our walk.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

The process here is being "transformed." The Greek word is "metamorpho" and is the same word that we get our English word "metamorphosis" from.

Here is where we have gotten tripped up. The "transformation" is *not* in regard to the mind. The transformation taking place is the continual metamorphosis into a greater and greater reflection of His image and glory. We transform to be more like Him as we literally change into His image. How? By the renewing of our minds. The word "renew" in this verse is the Greek word "anakainosis" and it is derived from 2 Greek roots-one meaning "reversal" and the other "new." The act of reversing our thinking and making it new is a decision. It is an act. It requires desire, decision and finally, action.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing

into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”
2 Corinthians 10:4-5

We need to first find out what the Word of God says about whatever topic is the issue at hand then drag it to the cross to kill it if it opposes His truth. As stated already:

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Romans 10:17

Then if the belief we have is contrary to what God’s mind is on the matter, we make the decision to accept His Word as truth or we reject His Word and keep holding onto the old dead man’s thoughts. We *already* have the mind of Christ. We must each choose if we are going to walk in who we are, or walk by what we already died to.

We cannot serve two masters. *“Casting down imaginations...”* What we think is what we choose to accept as truth for ourselves.

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...” Romans 1:21-22

Whatever belief we hold as truth in our hearts, if it is not in agreement with God’s Word and is not brought to the cross, is idolatry. Romans 8:6 tells us that being carnal-minded brings forth the fruit of death. Examine your fruits in different areas of your life. Take an

inventory. If there is not the abundant, overflowing life of God released in that area, it is a good time to examine what we are believing about that situation.

Let me clarify on a point. The Bible talks about seasons of sowing and reaping. If we sow life, (walk in the mind of Christ we have) we will reap life in its due time. If you are not seeing the fruits of your spiritual sowing, don't give up! It is coming. Everything has both a sowing season and a harvest season.

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” James 1:6-8

The Greek word for *double minded* in this verse literally means to be "two-souled" or to have two minds. We cannot operate in both the old man and the new mind we have been given. We simply cannot, if we desire to walk in true intimate communion with Him. Our soul (mind) is the gatekeeper to the kind of relationship we will have with our Lord. A soul that contends with God's Word will produce a compromised walk, and limits the depth of our intimacy with Him.

“Bring into captivity every thought...” Although this is commanded in 2 Corinthians 10:5, it is still ultimately our choice whether or not we will do so.

You will see the following verse repeated several times in this book:

“As a man thinks in his heart (literally- mind), so he is.”

Proverbs 23:7

There is much to cover in the Word on what it means to have the mind of Christ. From here, we can examine our beliefs, thoughts, and ultimately our actions. They can always be traced back to which mind we are choosing to live out of.

Ask the Holy Spirit for permission to show you where you have contended with His Word. Many times He will show you an area that you were not even aware is contrary to His mind. He is faithful and He is gentle. He leads us beside green pastures. Peace, rest and quietness are some of the outpourings of walking in agreement to His Word.

We commune with Him in Spirit and in Truth. Without truth there is no communion in that area...only death.

Choose life. Choose Him.

Chapter 2

Positional Righteousness

*"Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by righteousness." Isaiah 1:27*

OK, Church, before we go any further, we need to first camp on some foundation truths in regard to righteousness, and what exactly that even means. This is going to set the stage for all we dig into.

First and foremost, above all things please meditate on this: God loves you. He LOVES you. Everything... everything needs to be viewed from His heart of love... Discipline, correction, mercy, forgiveness, chastisement, blessings, intimacy, and even the judgements to come... it is all grounded in love. All of it. The reason we are often so divided within the church is that we try to bring forth truth, but unless it is grounded in love, we will miss the mark, pervert the message, and usually the listener will reject the word, or worse still, receive it and walk away with a deformed concept of our Dad. It's overrated, trust

me. Truth without love is to attempt to bring a candle into a dark room... while having it placed under a bowl. It just never works out too well.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1

Love... every aspect of our relationship is a result of His forever flowing, never changing... Love.

With that in the forefront of our hearts, let's dig in and talk about Righteousness.

There are two kinds of righteousness in regard to our walk with God. The first is Positional Righteousness and the second is Relational Righteousness.

Everything we study will be grounded on the foundation of Jesus Christ. The foundation of our relationship with Jesus Christ, our Chief Cornerstone, is based on *righteousness- His righteousness*, which was given to *us*.

The Cross redeemed us by *justice*...sin had to be penalized- this is justice... and by *righteousness*... specifically, the righteousness of a sinless Christ.

Righteousness is the very foundation of our true self-worth. Step one at this point is to personally accept a foundational truth:

Our true identity is determined by God alone.

What does this mean? How does this apply to our daily walk? Well, simply put, for us to find worth or value or “identity” in anything or anyone else is to live a life apart from His Truth about us. Three main foundational building blocks we need to grasp are:

Understanding our true identity starts at *The Cross*.

Our true identity is grounded in our salvation.

Salvation is grounded in our *Positional Righteousness*.

We must understand *Positional Righteousness* in order to understand *Relational Righteousness*.

As we dig into some foundational truths, you will probably have questions. In whatever areas that tradition, or wrongful (though well intended) teachings have found root within your mind, you will have some objections. This is good. This means your shield of faith is in operation. Please, bear with me. Keep open to the Holy Spirit. I humbly ask you let go of your “doctrines” for a moment, and allow His scriptures, and His scriptures alone, presented in context, to water your soul. What we are about to embark on, will without question, forever change your walk with your Heavenly-Dad, Redeemer, and Great Counselor. Above all, remember... *He loves you more than you can even imagine. Always... at all times. Without condition...and forever.*

Positional Righteousness

Ok, so what does the expression *Positional Righteousness* mean?

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

2 Corinthians 5:21

What is this verse talking about? What does it mean to become the “righteousness of God?” Paul addressed this foundational subject in the Christians of his day.

“For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone partaking of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.” Hebrews 5:12-13

“For when for the time you ought to be teachers...”

Let’s pause here for a moment. Throughout this book you will notice a theme repeated over and over. He loves you fully and unconditionally. Because He loves you in this manner He also gave us the greatest gift that His creation could ever be given.

Righteousness.

It does not matter how much we love our Heavenly-Dad. Nor does it matter how dearly and tenderly one loves our

sweet Redeemer or Holy Spirit. You see, it's not about us at all... At least not the way we have been taught to think. It is about His love toward us and His banner over us...not our love for Him. He wants His children both lost and reconciled to dare to open up our hearts and receive His love. His love for us starts with Him having made us righteous. Do we understand what this means? It's OK if we don't. But... once we do, it will forever change our walk with Him. It will forever change us.

"...for everyone partaking of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant."

The bottom line is, if one is unskilled in righteousness...one is still a spiritual infant in Christ. I did not make this up. Our brother Paul of Tarsus said this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

So, what does this mean? It means my dear brothers and sisters, that in order for us to walk in the depth of His Love, we must violently lay hold of what He gave us through the Cross.

The greatest invitation our Lord gave us was to accept the gift of being called righteous by and through faith in Jesus' shed blood.

Positional Righteousness is tied to salvation. Said in the form of a question: what exactly makes one "born again?"

Salvation, in the simplest terms means that we are restored to fellowship with our Creator. Our sins have been atoned

for. Why would God Almighty come up with a plan that involved His most precious Son to endure not only physical torture, but the torture of literally becoming sin and being torn from the very presence of His Father? Would you do that to your child? Would you...?

Here is the crux of it:

We receive salvation because we have been made righteous.

Righteousness means we are seen as forever Holy. Righteousness means the Father sees His redeemed son and daughter in the same exact way in which He sees The Lord Jesus Christ. Don't believe that? Well, the scriptures say it. We have become the Righteousness of God. This means to be placed in right, just and blameless standing before God. He sees us the same way He sees His own nature.

“But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation...” Colossians 1:21

This was a gift. It cannot be earned. Ever.

We are made holy and blameless through Jesus taking sin and death and nailing it to the cross. It's not our own works or behavior as a Christian that makes us more righteous. It is also impossible to become *more* righteous than “the righteousness of Christ.”

“It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” 1 Corinthians 1:30

Did you read that very closely? It is because of God... not your own achievements or good behavior, that you are made righteous. It has been freely given by faith and faith alone. Remember the word *faith* (Strong's Greek: 4102 *pistis*) means “to believe” (you will also hear this repeated a lot throughout this book).

Salvation is: acknowledging your inability to enter into the presence of God with your sin. Jesus atoned for it. You believe He is God and died for our sins. You confess this truth before Heaven and Earth.

The Bible says when we do this, we receive, through faith, the promised Holy Spirit.

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.” Ephesians 1:13-14

The Holy Spirit comes in response to receiving His gift. His gift of what exactly? It is not the gift of salvation as we often misquote. It is the gift of righteousness. And...it is *righteousness* that gives us salvation!!!

This is *Positional Righteousness*. We often skip what was given to us on and through the cross, and attempt to go right to the idea that we have *salvation*. Without understanding that we have been cleansed, purified, made holy, are blameless, and above all, have been given the gift of His *righteousness*, we will never be able to establish a proper Kingdom perspective of what took place on our behalf. We will never understand what we *have become*, namely, *forever* righteous in His eyes.

You see, my family, we can rest. Finally - once and for all. We can just... rest. His love that redeemed us is the same love that bathes you every moment of every day... forever. It cannot ever leave you. His love will never forsake you. This is the Sabbath rest that is promised to those who dare to believe. So go for it. It is your birthright.

Satan has sold us a bill of goods that has made us think Dad loved us enough to allow His Son to be punished instead of us... but then is so quick to make us jump through hoops to earn more of His love. This is a lie. His righteousness covers us always. We were cleansed. We were washed. We were forever made His beloved redeemed. It is the righteousness of Christ, given to us, that allows us to forever rest in his arms, His affection... His love.

We are home in Him. Now...and forever.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” Jeremiah 31:3

You may be thinking “How can I be righteous if I continue to sin? Doesn’t the Bible say to live a righteous life?”

Yes...but please, bear with me. Positional righteousness... our unchanging and eternal position before the Father is what we are talking about here. We are forever seen as holy and justified in the eyes of our Father, Savior, and Holy Spirit. How we choose to live our lives- whether we choose to live to sin, and how we chose to relate to our Lord... that is a *relational* choice. That is *relational* righteousness/unrighteousness. We will cover all that soon.

Positional Righteousness- meaning, how we stand legally before the Lord, can **never** change. This is given to us when we believe. We cannot skip this step. We believe, we confess, we are made righteous, and we receive the Holy Spirit. As a result, we are reconciled back to God. This is what salvation means: to be reconciled. It is impossible to be reconciled without first being made righteous. Said another way: one cannot be saved without first being made positionally righteous in His eyes.

“Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” Romans 10:4

Please, read that again...and slowly. Let it sink in. Righteousness is given... freely. It is the gift that is given when one believes. Righteousness means we are now restored to fellowship with God. No sin stands between us and the Kingdom of God anymore. We are made reconciled. We are made pure. We now have the Holy

Spirit inside our spirit man. We have become one in Christ. We only need to fix our affections on His love. We only need to turn our eyes to Jesus... Look into His eyes and see all that love aimed directly at us.

“for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye...”
Zechariah 2:8

“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him he endured the cross, scorning its shame,” Hebrews 12:2

“...for the joy set before Him.”

Ever stop to let your heart soak that in? What *joy* is being referred to? It was His joy of us being reconciled!!

This means we are enveloped in His love. All that passionate, patient longing to redeem us throughout the generations is finally bursting forth and always flowing over us. We just have not tapped into it.

You see... He always loved us. Always.

It was love that birthed the Redemptive Plan. “The Great Rescue” I have heard it referred to as. I adore that. It brings me to deep, sobbing tears myself. Before the foundations of the world He knew us. But He desires intimacy. He desires deep communion. This is now all possible because we were given His nature, and His righteousness...when we believed.

“For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”
Romans 10:10

We receive the gift of His righteousness. It is *His righteousness* given to us that gives us salvation. You cannot have salvation without righteousness. It is impossible. Our proper status with our Lord, which was lost when Adam and Eve sinned, has been restored. Salvation is only a result of us forever being placed back into the proper position we were created for. That position is *righteous*.

The Greek word for “righteousness” is *dikaiosuné* (Strong’s #1343) and it means *justice, justness, righteous, a divine righteousness*.

HELPS Word study describes it this way: “judicial approval (the verdict of approval); in the NT, the approval of God (divine approval).”

In other words, it is being in a judicially approved standing before God. This is not the same as holiness. Holiness is to be set apart to God. We are only referring to our **judicial** position before the eyes of God Almighty right now.

Let’s look at a verse.

“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:11

Once again, there was something that took place at the cross. A judicial decision was made on our behalf. Judicially, we are sanctified, cleansed and declared righteous.

The word translated in this verse for *justified* is the same root word for *righteousness* that we cited just before it.

This Greek word is *dikaioó* translated in Strong's as: "*I make righteous, defend the cause of, plead for the righteousness (innocence) of, acquit, justify; hence: I regard as righteous.*"

Let's pause here for a moment.

I know that for many of you there is that shield of faith that may be rising up now with several verses perhaps coming to mind about holiness and being sanctified. Holiness and sanctification are also aspects of Relational Righteousness. Said another way, they are also aspects of our walk with God and how we relate to Him, ourselves, and others.

Here is what we need to realize:

Whenever you see a verse that is speaking about righteousness, holiness and justification in the *past tense* it is referring to the completed work of the cross. We are forever seen before the Great Judge as the Righteousness of Christ. This is our Positional Righteousness. However, whenever the Bible speaks of conforming, changing, and walking after the image and nature of God, it is referring

to the relational aspect of our walk with Jesus. This is an admonishment to walk in Relational Righteousness.

“Holy” is the Greek word *hagios* and means “to set apart by (or for) God.” It is to be in likeness in nature to God. This word is an adjective and describes the way in which we choose to live.

“Sanctification,” it should be noted at this time, is a verb. Sanctification is the process of walking more and more set apart for God. These are aspects of how we choose to live and what we choose to invest our eternal riches after. More on this later.

Let’s keep going.

“and being found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.” Philippians 3:9

“This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” Romans 3:22

At this point I implore you. Take some time and just sit on this. Work it out in your mind and let your spirit man, which is communing with the Holy Spirit right now, bear witness to His Word. Let His Word begin to break up the lies and traditions that have allowed us to walk in self-condemnation and shame. Let it all get washed away. Take your time here and just be still...

Now...! Look at a wonderful verse, and see the full *power* of the gospel made manifest to us. Look at Colossians 1:21 again please. Then we will study closely the following verse.

“But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- (verse 22) if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.”
Colossians 1:21-22

Notice please verse 22 says the word “if.” The physical sacrifice of Jesus’ body will cause us to remain “*holy, without blemish and free from accusation if...*”

If what? If we try to live holy? If we try to act righteous? If we attempt to perform Christ-like deeds? If we fulfill our calling? If we are called to a big “ministry”? If we make certain we become more sanctified and holy...???

Emphatically... No!

“...if you continue in your faith.”

We remain judicially holy, blameless and pure in the eyes of our Father so long as we do not reject the faith. Remember the Greek and Hebrew word that is translated *faith* into English means “to believe.”

“...and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.”

Our standing in God's eyes is maintained solely... and without exception, on our not rejecting Christ as our Savior. Faith. Faith alone. Our relational walk with God can never, ever, determine our positional standing in His eyes. Never.

Now, at this point many of you are instantly going to the verse "**faith without works is dead.**" James 2:14

Family- we must read the scriptures *in context*. Traditions and unbiblical doctrines have been allowed to be passed down from generation to generation, and without us realizing it, placed us under the very yoke of self-righteousness and condemnation and shame we were delivered from through the cross.

It is time to be set free from these lies. It is time to allow ourselves to see us the way He actually does.

We are told in 2 Timothy 2:15 to properly cut, divide and handle the Word of God. Let's commit to being students of the word that study, cross-reference and "rightly divide" His scriptures by applying them in context. Let us start with the whole "faith without works is dead" doctrine. I think you will be exhilarated in your spirit as we practice proper biblical interpretation. And why not? It brings the clarity of the heart and mind of Christ as it is intended to!

If you read the entire second chapter of James (it isn't very long- probably why I like it so much) you will see that James is talking about believing something... and then not acting on it. The chapter even makes it clear by giving

examples. The principle James is discussing is that a belief must be acted upon. For example:

The work/action of believing we should lay hands on the sick... is laying hands on the sick.

The work/action of believing we *should* clothe the poor is... to actually go ahead and clothe the poor. To clothe the poor takes on a form of movement or action or "work" right?

The work/action of believing that we should take care of the widows, orphans and elderly is... yep, you guessed it - actually *doing* something about it.

Faith... without a corresponding works/action... is useless.

NOTE: Every belief that is fruitful, will have a specific corresponding action. Said another way: There is a specific action to each and every corresponding belief.

So... why do we mix up examples and misapply our faith whenever we read James 2?

Hmmm...

We talk about giving to the poor or doing some other "Christ-like" action and tie that into our salvation. I cannot begin to tell you how many times I have heard someone say, "Well I am not sure they are a Christian... I don't see them acting very much like Jesus and 'faith without works is dead'."

Forgive me guys, and I say this all in love.... but that statement shows a complete and utter lack of biblical understanding of the doctrine of salvation. It also shows that we have not been taught proper scriptural interpretation and application (FYI- I was one of those Christians who used to spit this verse out at others all the time. It was during what I would call my "Pharisee years" ... fun times... not really though).

Every belief with have a corresponding work/action. This means the action must correspond to the belief!

We cannot quote this verse in regard to salvation but tie in some kind of work/action as if we can do something to get salvation. The Scriptures that tell us righteousness cannot be earned, right?

Let's re-read Romans 10:10 and see what God says our belief about salvation must be. Then let's understand what the corresponding work/action that leads to receiving righteousness and ultimately, salvation is.

"For with the heart man *believes* unto righteousness; and with the mouth *confession* is made unto salvation."

The "works" or more clearly stated, the "actions" of righteousness is.... confessing Jesus as our Savior.

Let's read 1 Corinthians 1:21-22 again.

"But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- if you

continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.” Colossians 1:21-22

Now we can wisely, and in the context of proper biblical doctrine, compare this to John 12.

“Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God.” John 12:42

These men in history never allowed the works of their belief to be performed. They never confessed Jesus. The work (or corresponding action) of receiving righteousness is to believe... and THEN to confess.

Let me repeat what I stated earlier. Every belief that is fruitful, will have a specific corresponding action. Said another way: There is a specific corresponding action to each and every specific belief we have on any and all subjects.

You cannot become righteous by giving to the poor.
Nope...not gonna happen my friend. Giving to the poor, is a specific action that is in response to the belief we have a biblical responsibility as Children of God to take care of the poor (we do believe this though right, family? I digress, sorry).

Faith must have a corresponding action associated with that *specific belief*... otherwise that belief is of no value. It's useless. It's as good as dead. Said another way- the work/action is always traced back to the belief. We do not get to mix and match our actions and beliefs. We do not get to re-write how the Bible says we receive righteousness.

Not to completely belabor the point... but I will. We must get this in our wheelhouse, and so the following bears repeating: There is a specific action to each and every corresponding belief. If we would understand this Kingdom principle, we would dispel the vast majority of unsound and contradicting doctrines being passed around in this hour within the Church.

You cannot become righteous by healing the sick. No. The work/action of praying for the sick is in response to the belief that Jesus told us to do this and it is an integral part of fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15- more on this later in this book).

Finally, to come full circle and apply this principle toward righteousness.

The work/action associated with becoming the Righteousness of God in Christ is:

We become His Righteousness by confessing Him as our Savior. This, and this alone, is how we freely receive the gift of Righteousness, and through that, salvation.

To be absolutely clear here: I am talking about a sincere, heartfelt, Holy Spirit convicting realization that without Jesus, one is lost and bound for hell. I am *not* referring to some superficial, false conversion such as is rampant in this generation. God will not be mocked. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. One must respond with a sincere heart and with true repentance, with the acceptance of the reality that one needs to be forgiven and cleansed of all sin by the shed blood offered on the cross by the Son of God; Jesus Christ.

OK, now that *that* is settled, Let's go back one last time to Romans 10:10 again:

“For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The work/action/movement/deed of believing Jesus died for our sins is: *confession*. There is indeed a work, or action, associated with receiving Jesus' Righteousness... It is the “works” of our confession.

This is the principle of James 2:14 applied, in context, to salvation. This should finally clear up the confusion about “works” (which is simply another word for “action”).

Please, throughout this book, what will be reiterated is context, and using sound wisdom of the Holy Spirit to consider things wisely, and not based on recital of dead religious theology. We need to look at things clearly and with understanding. Things will become simple. His yoke is easy, remember? His life will begin to permeate

throughout all our thinking and living. This is the beginning of living *in Him*. It starts with knowing what we became... and it's awesome.

Jesus died for our sins. For those who have accepted Him as Savior, have been clothed, forever in His Holiness. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 61:10 -

“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.”

I added some portions of scripture at this point to help you meditate on your Positional Righteousness. Again, this is a gift. It is never taken away from the child of God. Unless one decides they no longer want the gift of salvation ... unless we outright reject Him, His Righteousness can and will never be removed from us. Christ is IN us. Father sees Christ in us... not anything, or anyone else.

Please - meditate on these verses invite the Holy Spirit to let them wash your mind until His Word and His truth are what you truly accept and believe about yourself.

“And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight.” Colossians 1:21-22

“It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our

righteousness, holiness and redemption.” 1 Corinthians 1:30

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

“According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Ephesians 1:4

“By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10

“Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.” Romans 10:3-4

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.” Colossians 2:9-10

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Walking by the Mind of Christ means walking in agreement to *all* His word. His word says we are made forever righteous. So we might as well embrace it. Awesome!

Now... let's tackle Relational Righteousness.

Chapter 3

Relational Righteousness

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25

Ok- we are forever righteous.

So.... let's go sin and do whatever we want, right? Who's with me?!

Well, not so fast. I don't know about you, but I would much rather experience the reality of deep communion with my Savior and walk in the realms of the Kingdom than live to sin. I prefer being aware of the reality of His tangible presence over the short pleasures of this world and how this world thinks. I prefer to hear the leading of the Spirit of God within me and feel the Shepherd's touch moment by moment. I enjoy allowing the Lord to use me to flow with the various different gifts of the Spirit as He would like to use me to minister to others. Above all... I prefer to bathe in the reality of His love and hear His voice.

I simply cannot do this as well or as fully when I am willingly engaging in deliberate disobedience. Herein is the relational aspect of our walk and whether we choose to walk in His righteousness or not. Remember as we read this, our choices in life never determine how He sees us, but it certainly determines to what degree we walk in the intimacy and love and full expression of His nature within our being. Even as I write this, I can feel His presence within me, telling me I am loved. No act of disobedience (whether that be in our doing or simply in our thinking) is worth severing that sensitivity. Not for me.

(NOTE: some of you may be thinking right now, “I don’t feel that, David.” The question to ask yourself is “Do I want to, and am I willing to do what it takes?” If the answer is “yes’ then this book will address that desire in depth- so please take heart).

Regarding our walk, we must each personally decide if we will live in a relationship with Him that reflects the new clothes and robes He gave us at the moment of salvation. Once again, this is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy:

“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” Isaiah 61:10

When Father sees us, He sees us through the blood of Jesus Christ. Again, let me reiterate. This is not a license to sin. Scriptures make it very clear that what we sow to we also

will reap from. Said another way, whatever we invest our time, energy and beliefs toward will be how we relate to God, ourselves and those around us.

Galatians 6:8 is a wonderful example of how we chose to live. We either choose to walk and relate to God according to His kingdom, His holiness and His righteousness, or we choose to live and relate to Him after the world, sin and death.

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Galatians 6:8

My family- if we sow to sin, we will reap the consequences of sin. Father God will still always see us legally and through His Heavenly Courtrooms as Holy and blameless and without spot. Jesus Christ gave us the Position in heaven as His Righteousness. That is a judicial ruling. Positional Righteousness is a legal and binding decision that was decided in the courts of heaven when Jesus took the keys of death, hell and the grave. Our position is forever settled.

However...

“Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” James 1:15

Relationally... sin will absolutely hinder our ability to commune with Him. He will never reject us. No! We

decide we do not want to commune with His Holy Presence living inside us when we sow to sin.

Look at Galatians 6:8 again please. Who is Paul talking to? He is speaking to born-again believers. Paul's letters are written to the church, not the lost. Paul is not speaking about salvation when he refers to eternal life. He is talking about the availability of His eternal life living inside us being either drawn upon... or being neglected.

This is about relationship. This is about intimacy. We cannot enter into true intimacy and relational union with Him if we grasp and walk in the Mind of Christ in regard to our Positional Righteousness... but then choose to live a life of sin and self-centeredness. It simply cannot be done.

Let us look at a very familiar portion of scripture.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.” James 1:7

First and most importantly here is we must realize the word translated here *wavereth* actually is the Greek word *diakrínō* and literally means, 'to separate throughout or wholly.' It is not to doubt, but rather to argue, fight or contend with God.

The immediate context in this verse is about asking the Lord for something. The principle however is, perhaps, even more important. James is telling these born-again

believers that if they thoroughly separate in their thinking from what God's Word says, they should not think they will receive much from the Kingdom. Why? Because we cannot sow to both the dead, carnal minded man and also to the mind of Christ at the same time. What we sow to, we also will reap from.

So how does this apply to our Positional and Relational righteousness?

If we are struggling with sin in an area of our walk, this means we are not walking in Relational Righteousness. Communion is hindered in that particular area. But, where the Church has failed to grasp and apply James 1 here is that we often start to think God see us differently because of that sin. That is contrary to the Word of God. That contends with what the Bible says He made us. He made us Positionally Righteous. No matter how much we live a life relationally given over to sin, He always sees us as Holy. He doesn't see the sin as holy though! He does not look upon our sin and smile. He looks upon us as Redeemed Children that grieve His heart because we have not allowed the intimacy of Communion to perform its work from the inside out to change us.

“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” Romans 6:16

This is talking about how we live making the difference in how we will relate to our Lord and His Kingdom. This is

referring to Relational Righteousness. Said another way, this verse is telling us that the decisions we make determines whether we will grow in His nature, or stay bound by the sinful nature which in Christ, we died to.

“We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.” Romans 6:6-7

Paul is stating that since we are made the Righteousness of Christ (Positionally) we should not relate to sin anymore. We are to walk *relationally* in the same righteousness as our *position* in Christ.

Here is another verse, which I love because it so clearly shows the difference between what the cross already made us, (namely His Righteousness), and as we begin to realize this truth, we can begin to walk in the Kingdom fullness (which is Relational Righteousness).

“In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” Ephesians 4:22-24

Notice the past tense here? *“Has been created...”* (we were given His gift of Righteousness).

In other words, Paul is saying “Hey family, stop relating to the world as if you were *not* made into His holiness and righteous and truth!!

Look at the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). Did Father ever see that wayward son any differently when the son was living to sin and death and self-destruction?

No. Absolutely not.

This is an example of positional righteousness. The son saw himself differently, but not the Father. However, did the actions of the son change the way the Father was free to relate to his son? Most emphatically, yes. The son turned from the intimacy and joy and comfort and peace and rest that proper relationship with his Dad would always offer the son. This is an example of how Relational Righteousness (or in this case unrighteousness) had an effect on the dynamics of their friendship, or special intimacy.

When we turn from the nature of the Kingdom of our Father, and chose instead to relate to Him, ourselves or others in a manner that conflicts with His nature and truth, we distance ourselves, not from His love, but from His touch. He is not rejecting us. We reject the reality of His touch and voice in our life.

Can we begin to see why it is so very important for us to first understand our Positional Righteousness before we can discuss Relational Righteousness? If we do not grasp

what legally took place at the cross on our behalf, we will fall into self-condemnation and guilt and despair.

“We love because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

Righteous living is meant to be an outflow of love. The greater the revelation we get of His immense and unconditional love of us, the more we respond.

It is spending time with Him and meditation on His word that causes the life of Christ to transform us. Not guilt, or to seek a love that is already fully given us.

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” Ephesians 3:17-18

Listen to the Holy Spirit crying out through our brother Peter the Apostle when he wrote:

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1:18

What is the morning star that Peter says will continue to rise up within our being? It is the revelation of Jesus

Christ! It is the very nature of Jesus rising up from within your most inner being. Changing and transforming you.

This is the true power behind Romans 12:2 when Paul states:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

We cannot transform our mind, or said another way, we cannot relate to our Lord according to the spirit, if we are not walking in truth.

“We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” Romans 6:6

“The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.” Romans 8:7

The carnal mind, which the Word says we died to, cannot and never will relate to God in truth. It will never submit. That is why we were given the mind of Christ through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. We must choose to relate to Him in truth. This is our choice. This is how we chose to live. Relationally in truth and Righteousness, or relationally after the carnal minded man and death.

Do we wish to sow to the dead man, or to Christ within us? This question addresses our desire (or lack of desire) for relational righteousness.

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.” Romans 8:9

When we received the Holy Spirit, we forever left the realm of the flesh. We are now citizens of Heaven and have been given the Mind of Christ and a new nature. But... we can choose to act like we still are. If we do, we will reap the consequences. Fear, anxiety, pain, torment. These are just a few of the fruits of that tree.

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” John 4:24

“Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” 1 Corinthians 7:1

These verses are more examples of how we are to live. However, this aspect of our relationship is a moment by moment choice. The decision to chose to live for Christ and walk in the new man and new mind He gave us is to be in response to the ever increasing deeper and deeper

revelations of His nature and love that we are meant to experience.

“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” Timothy 6:11

Some may be thinking right now, that if we are truly righteous by the blood of Jesus, why bother trying to live righteously? This is a valid question. Many of us have sought to “be holy” thinking God will love, accept, or approve of us more. Please remember this: He will approve or disapprove of one's actions... but He cannot, and will never, disapprove of His child. This is so vital to understand. This doctrinal truth will be repeated all throughout this book in various forms and from various scriptural perspectives.

So back to our motives. Why bother trying to conform to the nature of Christ if it will not change our Positional Righteousness? Well for one thing, our God deserves it. Period. He is worthy to be honored. He - is - worthy. He deserves our everything. This church generation, here in America, has completely lost sight of this reality. Our Lord is worthy to be honored. We honor Him by living in alignment with His Holy nature.

Secondly, it is vital to understand that our Lord longs for intimacy. We were created for deep, intimate fellowship with Him. He redeemed us, in love... so that He can have us sit at His table and share intense, wonderful

communion with Him. It's really almost beyond our ability to grasp. Our Creator... loves His children beyond words.

Sin hinders intimacy.

The more we seek to live a life of righteousness, the greater the depth of our communion and intimacy. This is not about earning His love. We are not to seek to act and mimic the outward appearance of Jesus so that God may love us more. This thinking is in contradiction to the word of God and contends with His nature. He loves you fully. He adores you. He died while you were steeped in sin.

He wants nothing more than to spend time with you. He wants you to begin to relate to Him in Righteousness and Truth. This is why He redeemed you. So that He may spend time with you. Deeply, passionately and intimately.

We are to seek righteous living in order that we may commune with Him more fully. It is *not* to be more loved or pleasing. Our actions may or may not please Him, but we, as His redeemed child - are already fully pleasing.

He loves you. He hates sin. Sin opposes His nature, and He cannot commune in sin. Sin blocks deeper intimacy. Do you want intimacy? Do you want to know what it is like to feel the reality of His love resting within you? Do you long to hear His voice and have Him visit with you in the late watches of the night? Do you long for Biblical encounters and interactions with His Kingdom?

I do...

Let me share with you a bit of my story.

When I first began to get a hold of this truth about how He sees me as holy, blameless, righteous and without blemish I completely unraveled. All the religious constraints that had bound me to not sin were removed. All the ungodly motivators were being unshackled. All the shame, guilt, pain and longing to be loved were starting to be exposed for the lies they were.

So I began to say to myself, "Well, David. What difference does it make if I drink, or smoke or curse? He loves me unconditionally."

"What difference does it make if I think lustful thoughts whenever I want? Who cares if I don't pray or read the Bible? Why be *good* at all?? He loves me!"

And so, for a brief period of time, I drank. I swore whenever I felt like it. In fact, I did whatever I wanted. The irony of this was that this was during my second year at Bible school. In the midst of being surrounded by Christians, I felt the hypocrisy of wearing a fear driven mask of holiness and no longer had any reason to continue to do so. All around me I saw my colleagues attempting to maintain a life of perfection and holiness. Except for one problem. It was not rooted in the love of Christ. It was rooted in fear and longing to be loved. The life of Christ was not at the center. It was dead religion. Dead... "born-again" ... religion.

Here is where it gets interesting though. After a couple of weeks of this, I stepped back and realized I was not sensing the reality of His presence as keenly. I was not hearing His voice as clearly. I was not rooted and established and grounded and as connected with the reality of His love for me. My thinking was dull and my ability to think according to the mind of Christ was waning. Above all this though, I felt a tug on my heart. It was the Lord. He missed me. He missed me very much.

And I missed Him.

So I read. I prayed. I spent time with Him. I began to cut out the very things I had allowed to be introduced into my life. Only now it was not out of fear of Him not loving me that made me stop. It was just the opposite. It was the reality of His love that compelled me. I longed for His touch, I longed for him to share with me the things that are on His heart. I missed our late night conversations and Kingdom interactions when all the world was asleep.

“Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” Romans 2:4

And then I understood better the scriptures that explain why we're to seek to walk in righteousness. It was never, ever meant to be so that He would love us more. He already loves us fully. It was not so that He could say He was pleased with me. In Christ I am already fully pleasing. It was so that we could grow in greater and greater intimacy together. It was communion. It was fellowship. It

was His Kingdom within my spirit that I was longing to walk more deeply in. I wanted to contemplate Him. I wanted to express myself to Him. I longed to sit with Him.

It was love.

The scriptures began to open up. I was beginning to see the Word through His Positional Love and Righteousness over me. From there, my desire grew to abide and then walk in His righteous ways. I began to long to think what He thinks, feel what He feels and see what He sees. I desired to be like my Heavenly-Dad.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

Now we can begin to see how understanding we are *positionally* righteous in His eyes is not a “license to sin” but rather just the opposite. It is the revelation of how much He loves us and what He gave us that motivates us to deeper and holier living! Anything else is dead works.

Paul wrote:

“For Christ's love compels us.” 2 Corinthians 5:14

Look at all the Apostles endured. It was love that caused them to press on. It was love that drove them to seek greater and greater intimacy. It was love that caused them

to lay down sin, and pick up Christ. Relational Righteousness is all about love.

If ever we are beginning to do or not so something and that motivation is based on a thought or feeling that is in contradiction to His word, we must reject that motive. We must crucify it. We must confess it as a lie.

Then...

We must draw from the power of the Living Resurrection within us and answer the cry of His heart.

He longs for us.

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Galatians 6:8

Do you read this verse a little more differently now in your heart and mind? You should. It's not about earning His love. It's not about self-righteousness so that we feel free to judge others. It's not about fear or your Heavenly Dad not accepting you. No...

It is about opening the door of your heart, letting Him in, and sharing the most intimate meal the Creator can have with His child.

More than ever, the Church needs to understand and distinguish in the Word the difference between the Positional Righteousness that the Lord Jesus imparted to

us, and living a life that mirrors that reality (Relational Righteousness). The greater the revelation of the former, the greater the desire to walk in the latter. It is that simple. It is meant to be simple. Our walk is meant to have us express His nature from our spirit-man, through our mind, and out of our bodies.

Relational righteousness, or said another way, a life lived seeking to walk in holiness is meant to be the natural response to the revelation of His love toward us. We can only do this if we first understand our position *in Christ*.

Only then may we begin to relate to Him and His nature in Spirit and in Truth.

Now, let us continue...

Chapter 4

His Righteousness is Ours

(Embracing our Full Identity)

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

The Word says that the Holy Spirit came to make His permanent dwelling place be within our spirit the moment we accepted the gift of righteousness/salvation. Two major changes occurred with us being reconciled back to God.

- 1. We are given the Mind of Christ**
- 2. We are given a new identity**

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”1 Corinthians 5:17

Once we understand that our spirit has been given the life, thoughts, power and nature of the Holy Spirit, and that we can choose to think His thoughts, the next step of making our minds come into agreement with His Word is to understand that we are a new creature in Christ.

"However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness." Romans 4:5

"And being found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith." Philippians 3:9

The Greek word used for righteousness - "Dikaiosune" means "*equity of character*" and comes from the Greek word "dikaios" which means "*equitable, innocent, holy just, right.*"

Put the full meaning of the word together and you have a word denoting "One who is innocent, holy, just and having equitable, or the same character of someone else." That someone else is our Creator and Lord, Jesus Christ. We are given through the atonement on the cross, the very standing before the Father's eyes as His Son. We are seen as righteous as the Ancient of Days, the Holy of Holies, the Alpha and Omega, The Prince of Peace. This is because we have been given *Jesus'* righteousness. It was a gift.

This is a stumbling block for many because we have chosen to contend with God's Word. In the name of (false) "humility" we refuse to accept the reality that we are as

righteous as our Creator. Here is where the foundation needs to be laid. **We did nothing to earn this.**

Just as Heaven is a free gift (Ephesians 2:8), so is all that comes along with being reconciled back to Him. God is holy. Everything He creates and touches is holy. There is nothing incomplete in His touch. Nothing unholy can come near Him. This is the picture that was given us on Mount Sinai when the Lord spoke to Moses and said, *"Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death."*

The Bride of Christ needs the revelation of who she is if she is ever to be prepared for Him to return to fulfill His wedding vows. We are spotless because of what He did. He took everything unholy, unclean and opposed to His nature, on Himself. In the moment Jesus did so, that was the "forsaking" that Jesus experienced on the cross. The anguish of the garden, I do not believe was not only the anticipation of the physical torture He would endure, but the spiritual separation from the Father He knew He would experience.

"By His stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

The Hebrew word for "stripes" is "Chaburah" and is actually singular not plural. The literal translation reads, *"By His wound, we are healed."* The Romans were skilled artists in the craft of torture. They spent centuries perfecting the art of taking a person to the brink of death without allowing them the relief of mortality. Jesus was literally flayed alive with strikes from bone and metal imbedded in leather from the flagrum they used for

torture. The design of this whip would rupture the skin on contact. After the whipping was done, his body would have been eviscerated down to arteries, leaving no skin left on his back and sides. This is why the Greek word for stripes is singular- literally "a singular wound" because he was one bruise, not many, when they were done with Him.

But Jesus knew all this was coming. He spoke of the scourging specifically to His disciples at least once (Matthew 20:19, Mark 10:34).

It was all part of the plan.

Consider this: Before the beginning of time, The Godhead decides that the Son would redeem a creation that hadn't even been formed yet. Before anything existed, Jesus knew He would one day enter Time to redeem His estranged children. Now, fast forward to the fall of Adam, and then arguably five thousand years of humanity's timeline passes. Jesus enters the realm of time in final preparation to fulfill the spiritual shofar sounded throughout man's existence. "Your Redeemer is coming!" The angels announce in a symphony to the ragtag men of the fields the commencement. A call and answer echoed throughout time. Isaiah 9 meets Luke 2. The greatest Marco/Polo ever shouted!

It is time...

He is in the garden, alone. His closest friends are asleep. He perceives in His spirit, that every second the steps of His betrayer draw the mob closer.

However...

In that moment, Jesus, with the full weight of that sacrifice upon Him says, in essence, "Ya know what Dad? Let's talk this over. This plan we worked out thousands of thousands of thousands of years ago... let's do this another way. I want out."

As I type this I am simply overwhelmed with the reality that the intensity of Jesus' turmoil was such that His forehead ruptured blood vessels. Yet this anguish was overshadowed by the unsearchable richness of His love for us.

"Not My will..." He said.

"Not my will..." The desire of Jesus at this moment was very different than the Father's. This is where the power of the Lamb and His love causes great sobs to rise up in me. He allowed Himself to be lead to the slaughterhouse. He laid down to the will of His Dad. Why? Because of His love for you.

There are simply no words for me to convey that depth of love, other than my heart repeating one word over and over. "Jesus. Jesus!" We just don't let it sink in. We choose instead to say in our heart, "No, I know how God really sees me. I am not worthy."

He did not lay down to the torture of the cross so that you can try to become worthy by your self-righteous acts of piety and false humility. That thinking has its origins in the world. It is unscriptural and has no basis for thought in the Mind of Christ that you have. It is THAT thinking that is unworthy of who you are. He died out of a love that I personally am incapable of articulating to you.

So why am I taking the time to landscape this picture so much? Because if we choose to accept what God's Word says, and we understand a bit more what Jesus actually voluntarily endured for us, we would begin to realize how offensive it is to Him when we argue with His truth about the new identity He gifted us through His torture. He died so that we are made holy.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:22

Why? Because He loves you so much He “figured out” a way to live in you.

“This righteousness of God is given through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” Romans 3:22

The word faith means "to believe." Did you exercise your beliefs that Jesus is the Messiah by asking for His forgiveness? If you did, the Word says that the Holy Spirit entered into you and imputed (freely gave) the righteous standing of Jesus, along with His worth, to you.

It is the power of the cross that gives us the gift of His righteousness.

“And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, Righteousness, and sanctification and redemption...” 1 Corinthians 1:30

It cannot ever be earned. Either before...or AFTER salvation. Ever. So please... stop trying to figure out a way to attain it. It is IN you. It is around you. It is upon you. The Kingdom and all of its righteousness is now in you. You are blameless, holy, beyond reproach or accusation. His fullness, His deity, His everything is housed in the Temple called "You."

“For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:17

If we are going to choose to walk in the Mind of Christ that we have been given with the new birth, then we must choose to accept that His word is true. Always. Walking in the Mind of Christ is abiding in agreement with His word. His word lets us know we have been freely given the gift of having His righteousness poured out upon us, and His righteousness, power, holiness and fullness dwells in us.

If you feel your thoughts contending with this, that is the carnal mind, trying to tell you what it wants you to

believe. That is because the carnal mind hates God and will never submit to the love of God. (Romans 8:7)

We died to that mind. We died to our sin nature. We are new creatures in Him, with His mind, His righteousness, and the greatest gift of all, *His raging river of love* churning and turning within us, bursting for ways to express His love to us.

His righteousness is yours. Dare to believe it. Dare to seek to comprehend how loved you are. Have the courage to agree with what He says about you. You are the righteousness of Him.

Then, and only then...can you share this gift with others.

Chapter 5

Our Worth is Complete in Him

“But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” Colossians 1:22

To the degree that we understand what it means to be the righteousness of Christ will be the degree that we abide in the Mind of Christ. Said another way, we cannot walk in the Mind of Christ if we do not apply what the Word says about who we are as His child.

Walking in the Mind of Christ has 3 basic steps:

- 1. Knowing the Word**
- 2. Accepting the Word**
- 3. Applying the Word**

KNOWING THE WORD

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

In order for a belief to be formed, one must first know what the word of God says about a matter.

“Therefore, faith (pistis) comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge...” 2 Peter 1:5

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” 1 Peter 2:2

ACCEPTING THE WORD

“But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message?’” Romans 10:16

If we do not accept as truth what God says about us, that truth has no value to us in our daily walk. We are dead to it. Once we hear the Word on any subject in scripture, we must accept it as truth for our own life. If not, we are not walking in the mind of Christ on that subject.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,

and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11

APPLYING THE WORD

“Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?” James 2:20

As already mentioned, one of the most misquoted and misapplied New Testament texts in my experience has been the James chapter 2 doctrine. This is because we violate the principle of taking scripture in context, and applying it, in context, to the rest of the Word. James is referring to faith. The word “faith” in James 2:20 is the Greek word "pistis" and it means *conviction, persuasion, belief*. It is the same Greek word used in Romans 10:17.

The word translated “works” is a Greek word "ergo" and means *toil, act, deed, labor*. If I claim to possess a belief on a matter and I fail to toil, act, or labor on that belief, then whatever that belief is, it is useless to me. Faith unapplied accomplishes nothing in my life. It remains dormant.

Faith, without action corresponding to that faith, is useless or dead.

Let us examine ourselves a bit –

- Do we believe God’s Word that says we are His righteousness? (2 Corinthians 5:22)
- Do we believe we are redeemed and without spot or blemish? (Col 1:22)

- Do we believe that there is nothing that can make us more special in His eyes, that we are fully pleasing, beyond reproach and complete in Him? (Hmmm....)

The Word of God says that wisdom is proved right by her actions and fruit (Luke 7:35). Our actions, or "works," in the end will always truly line up with what we really believe in our heart. Said another way, *our beliefs, thoughts, feelings and ultimately our actions will be dictated by which mind we are choosing to walk in.*

The carnal mind? Or the Mind of Christ?

Some scriptures to meditate on:

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was." James 1:23

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" Ephesians 5:26

"Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak." 2 Corinthians 4:13

What do we speak? We speak God's word over every circumstance and over every thought we have.

FURTHER APPLICATION:
WE ARE MADE COMPLETE IN HIM.

Now here is the crux of this chapter. We will only walk in the Mind of Christ in the areas we apply the Word. Certain camps of the Body of Christ apply this to healing and others to financial need. Still others apply the Mind of Christ to peace in circumstances and times of suffering and trials. The areas we apply the Word can be evidenced by the upbringing of that particular assembly and the emphasis placed on certain doctrines in that local fellowship. The time has come for the Bride to apply ALL the Word to ALL areas of her life. This study is about our self-worth. Here is the spoiler: you are loved completely. You are deeply, intensely and jealously adored. There is nothing that can add to your worth. There is nothing that can diminish your self-worth. You are complete in Him. You are fulfilled in His love. You are perfect objects of His affection. This is the positional and relational reality of ALL who have accepted Christ as Savior.

Anything that we think, say or do that is tied into determining the value of who we are as a person, as a created being, as His child, is **idolatry**. What?? That is what the Word says.

“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other...” Luke 16:13

The immediate context of this scripture is in reference to wealth, but the application and principle is the same. We cannot seek anything above Christ. We cannot say we are walking in knowing we are fully loved by Him, have the righteousness of Christ, are new creatures, have the fullness of His nature abiding in us through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in us...and seek to be liked, approved or loved by God's creation as an indicator of our inherent worth. Nor can we set standards for ourselves to determine our value, and be resting, walking, abiding, or processing our environment in the Mind of Christ.

We cannot be double minded. Let me say again: We cannot walk in the Mind of Christ and be seeking the approval of the world. We cannot use the world to create some self-imposed standard to which we must attain in order to be self-accepting. The "world" comes in the form of our own standards, our employer, our neighbors, co-workers, our family and loved ones, strangers, or dare I say, our pastor.

"Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ." Galatians 1:10

God made us beings who are meant to be vessels of His love, not seekers of the love of others. All things are to be experienced within the order of His Kingdom principles and mind.

"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." Matthew 6:21

Is God the treasure of your heart? Or is the desire of your heart to seek approval, self-worth and affirmation elsewhere?

“But the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.” Luke 4:19

Concerns, worries, desires and anything else not brought to the foot of the cross and made obedient to the Word of God will cause us to step outside of who we are in Him, and walk in the carnal mind which is dead to God.

At this point I need to stress something and just speak the truth in love. Not everyone desires to walk in the Mind of Christ in all areas. There are many who would rather seek the approval of those around them more than digging in and accepting the reality that we do not need the approval of the world to determine our worth. This message, although offered to all God’s children, is not what everyone wants. My heart breaks for those people. Why? Because as we get a revelation of what it means to truly know we are loved, it changes one... forever.

“Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” John 12:43

Anything that is not of God's Kingdom is carnal and earthly. Any thought or belief we are believing that is not in agreement with what His Word says means (in that arena) we are walking in the old man, which we died to. The grave clothes don't suit us anymore. We have been given the garment of salvation and a robe of righteousness. (Isaiah 61:10)

"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you..."
Colossians 3:5

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:4-5

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Romans 5:5

God loves us with an everlasting love. We are the apple of His eye, the center of His attention and affection. Knowing our worth is knowing how loved we are. Our worth never changes in the eyes of our Father. (Zechariah 2:8, Psalms 136:22, Song of Solomon 2:10,14)

We are complete in Him.

"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy

people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:18-19

The word "know" is the Greek word "ginosko" and it means *to know absolutely, be resolved, understand, to be sure.*

The word "knowledge" following it is "gnosis" and comes from the root word "ginosko." It means *knowing the act, a knowledge related to science.*

The emphasis here is that we are to personally know God's love, to abide in it, to be immersed in the understanding of what that love is and means, and not just have a mental or scientific understanding in our minds.

"To be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment - to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." Ephesians 1:10

We are only in unity to each other and to Christ to the degree we are in unity with His truth.

Now here is some more wonderful news:

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit love you fully, deeply and unconditionally regardless of whether or not you desire to know and seek Him more than the approval of others or any other standard you place on yourself. You are forever sealed in His affection.

Statement A: The Carnal Mind

"I need to (insert here). If I do not, it really is a sign of my lack of worth. I would just feel a little better about myself if I could only (insert here). I know it's silly, but I really just would be much more confident in who I am if I (insert here). Lord, could you just help me (insert) so that I can feel special."

Statement B: The Mind of Christ

"It would be much more pleasant if I (insert here) but I know I am fully pleasing to my Father, So its ok if I never ever (insert here). I can rest in His love. I am His. I am complete, I am home. There is none beside you Jesus, and I am yours."

Question: Who is more pleasing to the Father? Statement B Person, right?

Nope.

We are fully pleasing to Him already. (Colossians 1:21-22)
We need to make a distinction between our actions grieving or pleasing His heart, and the fact that His view of us, His attitude toward us, His intense affection and fierce passionate love never waivers under any circumstances. We cannot lose worth in His eyes, and we cannot add to it in any way either.

So what is the point? Well, One Mind produces life and peace and His fullness that we can abide in. And the other...death.

“The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.” Romans 8:6

Success, failure, wealth, lack, sports, exercise, looks, vehicles, make-up, relationships, employment, soul winning, clergy, laity (a word not found in scripture, but I digress, sorry), hearing God’s voice, dreams, visions, popularity, spiritual maturity, power, "my blog", etc.

Nothing... NO THING... was ever meant to determine our worth or lack of self-worth. If in any way, an action of ours or an action of others, affects the way we view ourselves, it is an idol. Whether it adds to our sense of well-being, or detracts from our sense of worth, it's all contrary to the Word of God and an offense to the cross. He died so that we may enter into his Sabbath rest. We are complete in Him the moment we accepted His gift.

“You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” James 4:4

What is the world? It is anything that opposes God’s Kingdom and His Word revealed in the scriptures. Let God be true and every man (the carnal mind) be a liar. (Romans 3:4)

Does our Father and Redeemer love the idolater? Emphatically... yes!

Do we get to enjoy a divine, supernatural relationship that surpasses understanding with all the fullness of what it means to be His child and friend?

Emphatically...No.

As I have mentioned another time, this is not a call to "works" in the Christian, religious, traditional sense of the word. There is a work involved though. That "work" is to conform your thinking to line up with His Word about you. This is a call to relationship. Our Dad (sorry, Father) desires nothing more than to spend time with His child. Jesus wants to sit and talk with you. The Holy Spirit (yes he is a Person, not a dove) yearns to call to you as deep calls to deep. They stand at the door and knock...

Do you have any idea what would happen if we got up and answered? He thrusts His hand through the latch in the midnight hour, calling with a heart that will never be satisfied with less than full communion and deep friendship. Why? You know the answer by now.

Anything that is in our lives that competes with God's Word about who we are is death. There is no relationship where there is death. I can have great understanding about certain things of God and can even learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as He moves without ever applying this truth to my life. I see this all the time. People minister with wonderful gifting, some move in tremendous *dunamis*... and then get offended at others. You cannot get offended if you are not looking to get something from someone. Sorry, it really is that simple. Feeling good that God used you to minister to another person? That is great... unless you think that means God

loves you more, or you are in some way additionally special now. Or *anything*, other than what His Word says you already are.

We have multitudes in the body of Christ walking around not even aware that their worth is being conditionally determined in their own minds by the sum of their perceived strengths, weaknesses, and fickle opinions of others. If we are going to walk in the Mind of Christ, this can no longer be. You are deeply loved, complete, fully pleasing, a treasure, without spot or blemish, a son and daughter and friend to God himself. Are you kidding? Amazing!

As for me? Why, it was just the other night I was rather frustrated with a tune I was trying to get proficient at on the bagpipes. Sullen and dejected I found my mouth was twisting under its own breath with some colorful sentiments aimed at my fingers. Why? Because I allowed a darkened thought to creep in unaware that was starting to weave its way into my identity, (*Sigh*) and so I had to lay the pipes down for a moment and just refresh myself in His love. It was rather brief and rather pleasant. And so was the rest of my practice session after I picked them back up - regardless of how I sounded. Super spiritual? Nah... just a whole lot nicer to live resting in His love at that moment.

By that I mean I cannot express the difference it makes to live in the Mind of Christ as it applies to my ever secure and unwavering worth I have in His eyes toward me.

So, have I arrived yet? Am I perfected in this knowledge and application? Ask my beloved brothers and sisters I fellowship with. It will get a laugh. But they also know I want to be free of ANYTHING that hinders me from being immersed in experiencing the reality of His love for me, and walking with Him in the cool of the day, or the hours after all my family is asleep...and every moment in between.

“There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” Hebrews 4:9

No more running. No more seeking. No more parlor tricks and energy wasted trying to feel unique. It is time we begin to rest in Him. Rest in His love for you. Rest in your self-worth being complete and unchanging. Now, and forever. Please... REST.

Chapter 6

Understanding Our Dominion

“And these signs shall follow those that believe: In my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Mark 16:17-18

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12

One thing I want to impress upon and encourage you with is this: UNDERSTANDING WHO YOU ARE as a son/daughter of God is the biggest and most important aspect of taking dominion over the enemy.

Knowing who you are means knowing Who lives inside you.

Knowing Who lives inside you means knowing who He is.

It is NOT about your own self-righteousness. The more the church begins to realize how Father God sees us (righteous, holy, blameless, sanctified and accepted) the more we begin to think and act like it. Remember Proverbs?

“As a man thinks within himself, so he is.” Proverbs 23:7

It is being in agreement with His word that releases dominion and power. We are going to have a very difficult time crushing an already defeated enemy, if we are walking around condemning ourselves, being fearful and contending with what God’s Word says about us. (James 1:6-7, James 4:6)

It is important to understand we are His ambassadors. We carry out His heart, will, mind, and intention on any and all matters. This means when we see the work of the devil, we are called to destroy it.

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” 1 Corinthians 5:21

It is not by our own holiness or purity or strength. God imputed to His son and daughter His nature and gave us the right to use His authority. It’s about His name and

faith in His name. Our faith is not in our faith. Our faith is *in Him*.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’” Matthew 28:18

“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” Mark 16:17-18

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.” Matthew 10:8

Jesus would not give His church a command that we, as His church, are unable to fulfill. Now, I have better things to do than go looking for snakes to pick up (trying to be practical here) but there is not much more that I enjoy than destroying the works of the devil, just like Jesus did. Jesus moved under the power of the Holy Spirit. We are given that same Spirit.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8)

Do you see a common theme here? It's not about us. It's about who LIVES in us!! It's His authority. It's His name. We are just carrying out His heart, mind, will and intentions because we are His child.

“A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

James 1:8

We cannot resist the devil and be agreeing with him at the same time. To contend, argue, or deny what the Word of God says on any matter is to be in pride... and that is the arena of the enemy. The authority we exercise must come from the mind of Christ (which means to agree with His Word) and then we will see swift, devastating results inflicted on Satan's kingdom in any and all areas we walk in agreement with God's Word.... and then apply it. (James 2:26)

To the degree we contend and argue with what His Word has to say about who we are as His child, is the degree we will compromise our ability to see His dominion, power and Kingdom exercised over an already crushed enemy.

When we approach the enemy camp, our mindset needs to be in alignment with the truth that we are there to destroy the enemy, not wrestle with him with the mindset that we may or may not have the victory.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

The more we meditate on WHO is inside of us, and who we are because of what the blood of Jesus made us, the faster, quicker and easier the results will be as we speak the Name of Jesus Christ. "Ritual" (*a set way of approaching something: a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order*) is fine when it comes to approaching and taking dominion and crushing the enemy, but no formula can, or is ever meant to replace knowing the One who is inside you.

When you know who you are, you can clearly understand who your enemy is: *an already defeated foe, who is petrified at the idea that the Body of Christ will begin to walk in her identity.*

It is very, very simple, but it is still a personal choice. And it really is not so much a battle against the enemy so much as it is a slaughter for the child of God. Agree with what God made you through the completed, accomplished and terribly costly gift of the cross.

Happy hunting!

SECTION 2

**The Carnal Mind
Exposed**

Introduction

This is where the rubber meets the road. In the end, no amount of confession or profession can change what we decide to believe. What we choose to believe is a choice. That choice is made moment by moment in our walk, and is meant to become not second nature, but rather, our first nature. The church has become very adept at learning how to say the right things and has learned what areas within our mutual fellowship it is socially acceptable to walk in the lies of fallen thinking.

Amidst all the programs, and outreach and building projects, the rise of the mega-churches and all the other "things" the church has strived to do in the "name of the Lord," we must at some point wake up and take a hard look at the spiritual condition of our nation. The harsh reality is that our works have produced little, if any, true eternal kingdom fruit in our community, our neighbors, our schools or our nation. This is because we can only truly release the power of the kingdom to the degree we are walking in alignment with His truth on any and all matters. Anything else is just religion.

Dead works.

As we continue to look at what we are thinking and feeling, we see they are the true indicators of whether our belief system is firmly rooted in his imputed righteousness to us or not. The reality is, our self-worth in the eyes of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is forever severed from our actions, and the opinions of others. But... there is simply no escape from the harsh reality that

what we feel and think is directly tied to what we truly, deep down, are choosing to accept as our reality.

We often wonder why there is so little true Kingdom power flowing in the church. Where are all the gifts of the Spirit? Where is the healing? Where are the "ordinary" everyday Christians who can share the gospel with such love and power that the listeners beg us to pray with them for salvation? It is His grace and mercy that He moves through a carnal minded Church at all! But this is not our highest calling. Intimacy comes from walking in His mind. Intimacy releases power and increases authority. This is a byproduct of our deep communion in and with Jesus Christ.

What we truly believe may, perhaps, remain hidden to other believers who are in the same bondage, but we cannot hide from our Savior, who loves us always and unconditionally no matter what lies we chose to believe. The hour has come for the Body of Christ to answer the call and the cry of His heart. He wants all of you. Take courage. He has overcome the world. He lives inside you. Let Him set you free in all of your thinking.

Keep pressing in, Beloved.

Chapter 1

Fear of Rejection

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” Galatians 1:10

Lie #1: My worth is determined by others

If we are going to walk in the full freedom of being deeply loved, fully pleasing and without spot or blemish, we need to be able to identify in what areas we are not applying the mind of Christ which was given us at salvation. (1 Corinthians 2:16)

We are entering into the dawn of new ground being claimed in the Body of Christ. The “new man” is being spoken of more than any other generation I believe. There are many rising up exhorting the Bride to realize we have His mind, His nature and His power inside us. (Luke 17:21, 1 Corinthians 3:16)

The full gospel is beginning to emerge in this Age that is intended to usher us into a place where the world will see a real difference in those who walk with Him in spirit and in truth... and those who do not. Seeing and experiencing the goodness of God is what leads His lost children to be reconciled back to Him. (Romans 2:4). That goodness is revealed in power through His children walking in kingdom fullness. We can only walk in His fullness (peace, rest, power, love, health, and abundance) to the degree we agree with what God has stated is truth on any subject.

But...

We can say we possess the mind of Christ (and as believers, God's Word says we do have it) but we will only walk in it to the degree we *apply* His Word to our identity in each area of our thought life.

Here is that verse yet again:

"For as a man thinks in his heart, so he is." Proverbs 23:7

The Hebrew word for heart is "nephesh" and comes from the root word "nephash" which means *to breathe, breathed upon, refresh*.

It is the same word used in Genesis 2: "...man became a living soul." This word describes ourselves in terms of thoughts, life, existence and cognitive being.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23

The Hebrew word here for "heart" is "lebab" and it is translated: *most interior organ, bethink, breast, comfort, courage, tender(hearted), midst, mind, unawares, understanding.*

It has 2 root words related to it: "leb"- which translates: *the heart, feelings, thoughts, will and intellect*, and "labab"- *to be enclosed.*

If we put these together, in context, we can begin to see that our thoughts, our beliefs, what we hold as our being, determine who we believe ourselves to be. And our thoughts and beliefs determine what kind of life springs out of us.

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence.” 2 Peter 1:3

“Many people did believe in Him, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn’t admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.” John 12:40-43

If we are experiencing fear of man in any way, it means we are not walking in the truth that we are completely loved and fully pleasing to the Father.

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18

Does this mean we don't have God's love in us if we are afraid?

Absolutely not.

Romans 5:5 states that we have the love of God poured out all over our hearts. It simply means the reality of His love for us is not perfected or complete.

We do not fear to the degree we have the revelation of His love for us.

That Love says we are complete. Complete means lacking nothing. Nothing can add to our inherent value. Our worth is forever secure in His eyes.

Think about it for a moment. Let it sink in. Jesus endured the torture of the cross, so that we can be called His redeemed children and walk in intimacy with our Creator and Father. The Holy Spirit came into us.

I hear Christians cite all the time that He died for our sins. He loved us soooo much the Father sent the Son to die. Let me ask a question. Did the Father think His Son was never coming back? Did Father God say, "Well, there goes my Son. Nice knowing Him"? So, since Father knew His Son would return to Him in heaven, what was so great a loss

about Jesus dying? Where is the love that is supposed to be so deep in that? After all, Jesus was returning back to heaven when it was all done. Where is the real sacrifice?

The sacrifice of the Roman crucifixion was twofold. If we can let this become a personal reality it will forever change our thinking.

The cross was torture. Torture beyond words. I already painted a watercolor image of the reality of this ordeal in an earlier study, so I won't repeat it here. Pure and simple. Physical torture. Picture for a moment, you watching a loved one go through that. Frame that in your mind, knowing you could stop it at any time. But a greater love compelled you to allow it. Anyone out there going to do that? Are any of you willing to let a son, daughter, father, mother, best friend or spouse be tortured to the point of death so that a judge can then say, "OK, the court now says you can legally adopt another child. That orphan is eligible to be taken into your home now" ?

Hmmm...

Secondly, Jesus was separated from the Father. Communication and communion was severed. Jesus became death, sin, sickness and spiritual separation. He entered the oblivion of spiritual death from the Father. The Creator of Life... entered spiritual death.

No big deal, right?

Is it beginning to dawn on your heart how much you are loved? Let's continue.

Jesus said, **"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."** John 16:7

Have you ever stopped to think on this? The Holy Spirit wasn't obligated to come. The indwelling of the Spirit is a gift. Everything our God does for us emanates from love. A deep, burning passion to enjoy our company.

"I don't call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. But I've called you friends, because I've made known to you everything that I've heard from my Father." John 15:15

"But I don't know everything," you might be thinking. The point is that we have His mind in us. He revealed the nature and love of the Father to His friends.

The Bible is not a rule book. It's a diary written by the One who tells us how we can enjoy the greatest friendship possible. And beyond that, we are His Bride. Read Song of Solomon sometime. It's almost embarrassing. We are His beloved, to say the least.

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'." Acts 2:38

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected within us.” 1 John 4:14

So, why all this redundancy? What is the point, and what does this have to do with the carnal mind being exposed?

If we are fearing what man thinks of us; if we are looking for the acceptance of others in order to feel a transient (and it is always transient) sense of deeper worth, we are not walking in the truth that we are fully loved by Abba, our Creator, and the Gift that lives powerfully within us.

We cannot serve two masters. We are not walking in the mind of Christ, who said we have been justified, reconciled, purified, redeemed and are now fully accepted, while being afraid of rejection. (Ephesians 5:21, Colossians 1:19-22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 5:9, Proverbs 29:25).

We fear rejection to the degree we are not experiencing the reality of this truth in our mind and innermost being.

Said another way: *The carnal mind is revealed by the thoughts and motives of our heart.*

Actions, though, can be deceiving. We as Christians have perfected the art of spiritual sleight of hand. We take the scripture, “...live by the Spirit, and you will never fulfill the

desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16) and we have inverted it. We have bought into the works and law-based carnal minded system that says - "If we do not fulfill the desires of the flesh, this means we are now walking by the Spirit."

Ahhh...no.

What we are doing is walking in tremendous strength of our willpower. One of the lies of the carnal mind is the lie that we need the approval/acceptance of others to make us feel valued. On a good day we act as if we don't care (denying the flesh/carnal mind), we suppress our carnal impulse, we ignore the pain, stuff it down with some comfort crutch in order to dull this searing discomfort, and we declare ourselves Spirit-led and abiding in the mind of Christ. After all, we are the victorious church!

Jesus described that type of person as a "white washed tomb." That is not who we are. We are "the redeemed."

"But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11

The Holy Spirit is in us to give us the Mind of Jesus, so that from the innermost man, now in union with Life itself, we are changed into His image by accepting His Word as truth and walking in it. He works from the inside out.

Some believers may be quick to recognize that they struggle with the fear of rejection. Others may boldly state that they could not care less what others think of them.

Yet how many bear witness to this: controlling anger when we are wronged? Genuine sarcasm in response to someone says something cutting toward us? A need to let others know just how much we "don't care" what others think? The compulsion to be rude and say, "I just tell it like it is"? Feelings of anger when we are disrespected...by complete strangers!?

These are all signs we are walking in the carnal mind. Specifically, walking around believing one way or another, that our sense of worth is tied to how others accept or reject us. If we, in any way, are conscious of the possibility that others may reject us - to that degree, we are not walking in the mind of Christ. We are fearing rejection.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." I John 4:18

NOTE: The punishment we fear is the rejection we might face from others. This fear is the carnal mind exposed in us.

I am going to go one step further and take one of the most quoted sections of Corinthians and bring it home.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres..." 1 Corinthians 13

This famous "love" chapter is often cited in regard to "works" or how we act or behave. This is one of the most propagated distortions of scripture. "Walk in love" means literally to have your motion, activity or anything else that is being done, be accomplished from a position where *one is submerged, immersed and abiding IN the reality and power of His nature (Love).*

Nowhere...nowhere, does the Covenant of Jesus Christ discuss love as an act, except as an outpouring of the heart. That thinking is old covenant. The old covenant exposed the carnal mind by saying "don't give in to your carnal desires." The new covenant says we are given a new mind. Walk in that new mind. That new mind is love.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in His love... My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." John 15:9,12

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." I John 4:16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Colossians 3:16

The phrase "In Him" means to be immersed in His nature. This is not an "act." It is a state of being. A state of existence. We either are abiding in His mind/nature, or we are abiding in the carnal mind, which is no longer who we

are. We have the mind of Christ now, and if we allow it, the Holy Spirit guides us in the wisdom and mind of Christ moment by moment. (1 Corinthians 2:16, John 16:13) King Saul, the first king of Israel, was consecrated by the last judge of Israel, Samuel the Seer. Saul was called to lead the people as a nation who would draw all others to see the goodness and power of Yahweh in the midst of surrounding nations steeped in all kinds of vile witchcraft and demonic practices. He was given all the necessary spiritual equipment to carry out his mandate as king, and the word states that the spirit of God came upon him and made him a new man. Whom God calls, He also equips. Saul was given all the tools needed to lead as a mighty man of God. He was to shepherd one nation, under God, to serve Him in holiness and truth.

Samuel told Saul, "As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, timbrels, pipes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you." 1 Samuel 10:6

"...Do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you."

I love that. Would that we would understand the grace and favor we have when we submit to His will for our life.

This was Saul's destiny. His purpose. His calling. But it was not long before the areas he needed to be brought to the altar of God in his heart and mind began to surface. In fear, he violated Samuel's commandment to wait for him on the eve of battle (1 Samuel 13) and some time later, because he was afraid of the rejection and possible consequences he might face from the troops under his command, he again disobeyed the instructions of God.

"Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them.'" 1 Samuel 15:24

The cumulative effects of Saul not mastering his fear through mediating on who he was in his Creator's eyes were catastrophic. First he lost the blessing of allowing his son to sit on the throne after him, and next, his commission was passed along to one who would put the Lord ahead of the fear of man.

An even more profound example, in my opinion, was Peter. A man who walked the earth alongside Jesus, Peter was a witness to all Messiah did. What is more, Peter was in the inner circle. He saw Moses and Elijah in their glory along with Jesus. He did a little something such as walk on top of a lake and was given one of the greatest recorded revelations about the redemption of man in a vision (Acts 10:15) and even received such revelation that the Holy Spirit penned a couple books of the Bible through his hand.

Yet, even Peter, got sloppy. He failed to take captive the old mind which whispered in his ear the lie that there was something to be gained by being accepted by others.

“But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.” Galatians 2:11-13

What makes Peter’s actions here, which were conducted out of fear of rejection, (need for man’s acceptance) even more grievous, was that Peter’s vision he received dealt directly with this topic. God Himself told Peter all are clean and accepted in His eyes. Had Peter been meditating on the reality that His Father saw him as unconditionally accepted, the pressure to conform would not have entered his thoughts. Peter was not walking in the mind of Christ in that arena. Paul had to straighten him out.

At any time, at any moment, we are either abiding in one of two places: The carnal mind or the mind of Christ. What the Body of Christ needs to understand is that it is a thought by thought decision. Meaning, every thought we chose to mediate on, on any and all subjects, is a choice on whether we will exalt the Word of God on that subject, or exalt the carnal mind. Abiding in the mind of Christ, the new man, is meant to completely envelop us. Why?

Because God is interested in our performance? Is it a works based righteousness He is after?

Not at all.

It is all about love. We can only enjoy fellowship with Him in the areas we are walking in His truth. And He is such a jealous Dad, He wants all of us. So does His Son, and so does the Holy Spirit. They love us that much. The second reason, as with all other topics related to His Kingdom, stems from the first. Because of His love for His children, He rages at the thought of us being held captive to fear, pain, anxiety, torment, or any other emotion that is in violation to His rest.

Whenever we are looking to receive acceptance from man, which is another way of saying we are fearing rejection, we must examine the lie we are believing at that moment. That lie is in direct conflict with the truth that God said we are the righteousness of Christ, which means we are fully pleasing to Him and cannot be made more perfect.

“For He who had not known sin made Himself to become sin in your place that we would become the righteousness of God in Him.” 1 Corinthians 5:21

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32

“For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things,

whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” Colossians 1:19-22

It is work in the beginning. To begin to recognize that our worth is independent of anything we can or cannot do, and is not attached in any way, to the acceptance, approval, dislike or outright rejection of others takes some time. We died to the carnal mind. It is time we enjoyed the blessings of the cost warranted to give you His mind. There was a bounty on our head. He paid the ransom so that we can forever be free from the task master of performance and the sting of fear.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.” 2 Timothy 1:7

Our worth is forever settled. The world says worth is the aggregate of your performance and conditional value in the eyes of those around you.

This is a lie. Our worth has forever been determined by our Creator and has forever been severed from anything else. The land of rest lies in our midst. It is among us, around us. It is in us. It is His spirit and His mind released that enters us into His rest. His eternal Sabbath. The rest is yours to possess. The Kingdom is already within you and

released by agreeing with His Word. Take hold of that which is already yours.

Take it.

Chapter 2

Fear of Failure

(a.k.a. my self-worth will rise and fall)

“and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.”

Colossians 2:10

Lie #2- My Worth is Determined by My Calling, Function & Actions

I am going to address a widely spread misconception about who we are as His children...and who we are not. The truth is, our worth is never changing. It cannot be added to, nor can it be diminished. Our calling (or "purpose, or "anointing," or "vision," etc...) is *independent* of our value as a child of God.

Ministry is an outflow and by-product of our relationship with the Lord. We are called to Himself, not to ministry.

“Such as I have, I give to you...” Acts 3:6

If we derive comfort from our "calling," we misplace our identity and self-worth. Invariably the question of "who am I?" will have its answer centered around what we believe He has commissioned us to do.

Our fullness is given to us in Christ. It is forever established. It cannot rise and fall. Our fullness is in His righteousness that was given to us. It can never change. It cannot be altered.

Without embracing this, we misplace our rest. Our rest is not in our calling. Our rest is not in our ministry. Our rest is not in the way we function in the Body of Christ or in our gifts. Our rest is in Christ. Him alone.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish..." Proverbs 29:18

This is another verse that is so often twisted. How often this verse is used to encourage this "quest" for our identity. When we get wrapped up in trying to determine what our "ministry" or "calling" is, we will feel lost unless we know what we are "supposed to do." This is misplaced identity and it is another area which reveals we are drawing from the fallen thinking of the carnal mind. We will remain feeling lost. Or worse yet, we will become a Pharisee. We accept Christ and then instead of being taught the truths about how special and wonderful we are as His child, we simply run to another idol for our sense of well being and value. Only this time we do it under the guise of spiritual maturity.

One of the main reasons the body of Christ struggles so much to look different from the world is that we don't feel much different from the world. What is more, we have not been taught to think from the mind of Christ that is now inside us, and is accessible through His word and prayerful communion. We are discouraged, sullen, depressed, without peace and rest. Above all, we don't understand the vision we are called to walk in.

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." Isaiah 26:3

The vision we are to have is not a vision of ministry. It is the vision of our Savior. We keep our eyes fixed on Him. He is our vision.

He is our calling. We are called to Him.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but when the desire is fulfilled, it is a tree of life." Proverbs 13:12

The reason so many children of God fall to deception, discouragement, depression, witchcraft and pride is because our hope is misplaced. Our hope is never meant to be in how He will use us. Nor is it in what He will "do" through us. That is not our true vision. If we study the Word, and look at how our brothers and sisters who had a relationship with their Redeemer lived, we will see a common theme. A principle of His Kingdom is this: *Greater revelation of Him will reveal greater revelation of what He wants to do.*

Study the prophets. Every vision God gave them, whether it was events to come (foretelling) or expounding on events or principles that already exist (forth-telling) was aimed at entering that child into a deeper understanding of the nature and heart of God. This is to be our vision. The definition of "vision" is this: *the faculty or state of being able to see.*

The more we seek the heart of our Creator, the more we will think what He thinks, feel what He feels, and see what He is desiring to reveal to His Church. We will be more passionate about the things He has passion for. This is called "communion." This is fellowship.

And this is why we were created. It is our true purpose, our true ministry, our true vision, our true calling.

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:11

It brings Him great pleasure to spend time with His creation. I urge you to read Genesis, The Songs of Solomon, The Psalms, Hosea....

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." John 13:23

Did you catch that? John was literally resting his head against our Lord's chest. This picture often chokes me up. Both Jesus and this man were so secure in who they were, the freedom to give and receive from each other was

without hindrance. I say "both" because we often forget Jesus was also a man. In fact, He was *the - perfect - man*.

Did you hear that my friend? Want to know what a man is? Read about Jesus. Begin to let go of what fallen man says, and let yourself be who you are created to be. Stop stuffing it behind the veil of this fallen world, constructed by the one who made himself unworthy to stand in the presence of God.

Misplaced vision causes us to begin to create a conditional sense of self-worth, contrary to what God says about us. We are complete because we are His child. Not because of our calling. Not because of the vision He has given us to minister to others.

NOTE: If we seek to find worth, not acknowledging that our worth is already forever established as His child, servant, and friend, we will fall into self-deception.

That deception will come in the form of legalism, spiritual excessiveness, self-delusion and pride, to name a few.

NOTE: Any area in our life that we pursue because we think it will add to our worth IS IN OPPOSITION to the Kingdom of God, to His word and to His will for our life.

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation— if you continue in your faith,

established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel...." Colossians 1:19-22

We are already complete. It is finished. What we do or don't do cannot alter this reality. All we can do is live in the realm of self-deception. A "vision-based" identity, at its root, is to say that there is more to get than what Christ has already imparted to you. This is another lie.

This is one of the greatest deceptions being perpetuated in the Church today.

Let's read the rest of the verse:

"...this is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant." Colossians 1:23

What is the Gospel? The word gospel means good news. The good news is NOT that God has a vision for us in terms of ministry. The good news is NOT that He has a plan for us to make ourselves feel special and unique based on the unique, one-of-a-kind blueprint for our life.

No.....

The Good News is we are reconciled to the Father!!

To the degree that we do not understand and embrace this is the degree to which we will walk in pride. Pride is to seek worth apart from God. Our rest and completeness is

in abiding in His presence and communing with Him and in Him. Ministry is not our reward. He is our reward.

“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” Genesis 15:1

There is a growing movement and trend, especially in men's fellowships, to try to give men of God identity and purpose by filling them with a sense of destiny. This is misplaced vision. Depression, despair, and any perceived lack is a result of not knowing who we are as His child. Seeking God so that we can fulfill our destiny leads to a perversion of who we are called to be. Fellowship is not to be "me" centered. When this occurs, our motive is now to find meaning...and the Word says we already have meaning.

Failure to embrace His truths toward us leads to:

1. **Intellectual Ascent** (*our worth comes from our mind*) - we turn to the soul as our source of worth and our relationship becomes one of mental understanding. The realm of the spirit becomes a closed door to us. (study the Pharisees)

2. **Spiritual Mysticism** (*our worth comes from our spiritual experience*) - *this is a grave danger*. Seeking experiences is never to be our goal either. We must instead seek Christ. We spend time in His presence and develop our spiritual senses through communion. Spiritual understanding is a natural result. We do not seek Him in

order to experience the "supernatural." We seek Him to spend time with our first Love. To seek Him in order to get something from Him is *spiritual prostitution*. It leads to all sorts of experiences that have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. (read the Book of Jude, Acts 8:9-25). We will never get to hear or know the heart of the Father with this attitude.

3. Pride (by the power of our own will, not the Holy Spirit, we accomplish our goals) - now we see ourselves as superior to those around us. Worse still, we attempt to swallow up others in our drive to see our vision fulfilled. Our vision is linked to our identity and worth. Titles and presumption begin to fill our soul and the motive of our heart is to try to "become more." The spirit of Pride seeks to strip others of their identity. People become an extension of our own driven self. Many of God's children are suffering under this bondage today. (Read Kings and Chronicles, & story of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel.)

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Our calling, our God given vision, our meaning, our purpose, our destiny is to be reconciled by the ONLY means that salvation comes: The blood of Jesus Christ.

This is not the end. This is the doorway to which intimate fellowship may be experienced. This is how the realms of his kingdom are made visible to us without compromise.

It was not the outer court of the Temple that was split when Jesus died. It was not in the inner court either. Man could worship in either of these places already. It was the Holy of Holies shroud that was torn in two. We have access to a place that would have caused man to die before the Atonement of the blood of Christ.

Make sense? Under the old covenant... up until Jesus died, if a person walked through that curtain... it was "curtains" for them.

Death. Instant death.

And yet...

Anyone who received the Spirit at Pentecost weeks later (the new covenant being initiated with the Holy Spirit now dwelling IN the believer) could have walked right in there though. Our destiny is to live with Him, in the Holy of Holies.

Look at any person in scripture that was willingly used by God. They were not seeking a commission. They were seeking Him. They were seeking His face. Their calling came as a result of their communion. God initiates. The answer to the growing sense of lack of purpose is not resolved by a 12-point self help book or an emotional stirring of our "purpose" to "do." We are not called to "do." We are called to *"be."*

Our destiny is the throne. That throne is in us by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The answer to the

sick heart of the Body of Christ is found in communion with Him. This is not exciting to many because we do not have a revelation of our self worth coming from Him alone. Instead, ministry, calling, and "doing" feeds our worth to the degree that we continue to cooperate with the carnal mind.

"The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." Romans 8:6

"But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." Romans 8:9

When we received Christ, we died to the carnal man. We now have the Spirit of the living God inside us. We are His Temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16)

"Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in His death?"
Romans 6:3

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

We are given a **new mind** and a **new identity**. We are partakers of His righteousness and we are now thinking His thoughts. As a redeemed child, we now have the ability to do this, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

“For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 2:16

Sadly, the carnal mind, which we died to when we accepted salvation, is still being dug up and communed with, within the Body of Christ.

This is a spirit of necromancy. It is communion with the dead. It produces no Godly fruit, no life, nothing of eternal standing. It brings forth death.

“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” Revelation 2:2-4

My brothers and sisters, this is *Jesus* speaking. He is talking to born again believers!

We are to walk by the mind of Christ which we are given and is in us. If we truly understood what it means to be the righteousness of Christ, we would want nothing more than to spend time with Him. It is in His presence that we experience the fullness of His nature. We commune in Spirit and Truth. This is not a mental experience. It is a spiritual one. To live on the other side of the veil is a world beyond anything else we can experience on this side of eternity.

Church - let me end here with a final word of exhortation. Let us make this hit home a bit more.

“Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before (Moses)...” (Read Exodus 33 & 34)

“Then He said (to Elijah), 'Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' ... but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.” (Read 1 Kings 19)

Jesus, once again, speaking to born again believers... children who had received the Holy Spirit, said:

“If any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will eat with him, and he with me.”
Revelation 3:20

There is no greater revelation to seek than the Voice, Mind, Heart and above all, Love that He has for you.

There is nothing greater... the Creator...talking to YOU...about what is on His heart.

“Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?'" Genesis 18:17

This fellowship produces His nature made manifest in and through us. This is what delivers us from depression, anxiety, fear and all bondage.

My dear brothers and sisters... I say to you on behalf of our Father... let it all go. Just let go. Go back to the beginning. Go back to where it all began when you saw the earth as shiny and new and clean. When you first realized there was true life and that this life was now in you. He was orchestrating all of creation to meet you there.

He is not waiting to impart to you His ministry for you. Or His vision for you. He so desperately walks the garden of your heart in the cool of the day, waiting for you to meet Him there... searching for you.

He wants to impart to you... *Himself*.

And He waits still....

SECTION 3

Understanding the Times

Introduction

We can now begin to see that to the degree we are walking in His truth about Him and ourselves, we can accurately discern the things He is attempting to do in and through His Church.

As we draw upon His Righteousness as our own, we will begin to see more and more of the realities of the Kingdom laid bare and more easily visible. The mind of the Kingdom is meant to be our normal mindset. We are called to think, feel, and act according to what we see our Father in Heaven doing. We carry out His will. Every generation is called to fulfill His will for their part of the unfolding of history and the race to eternal fulfillment of His plan.

Though the gifts and functions of the Holy Spirit is beyond the scope of this book, we can already begin to see that without walking by the mind of Christ, the Church is doomed to fall terribly short of functioning as she is called to function. It is simply impossible to walk according to our calling if our function (or the uncertainty of our function for that matter) is our source of self-worth.

Because the Church has outright contended (some knowingly, and others in ignorance) with His Word and truth about our identity in Christ, many of the different gifts and areas of service within the Body have been outright scorned. This may not be in word, but certainly in how we choose to relate to each other, or rather, not relate to each other in corporate church life.

Because we have not been taught much about the full heart of God, the church in America has stifled anyone who dares speak of the Father's loving correction to make course adjustments where we have turned away from our First Love.

We have been scared, bullied, or simply falsely taught in regards to what our Dad's loving discipline is meant to impart- namely Life and intimacy. We are called to fulfill His heart and desire upon the Earth, and more specifically, the nation we live in. How are we to do this if the eyes and ears of the Body have been removed? We have reduced Father's heart and desire to shallow exhortations and ambiguous words of prophecy aimed at gratifying ourselves only.

When was the last time we heard what was on His heart regarding intimacy, or for those that are dying without a Savior? Compare our mentality toward the Body of Christ that is being tortured all over the world, right now... as you read this. Does the Church perceive what the Lord's heart is for the current season in regard to a city, a state, a region, a country and the world in this hour?

By now we should all be fully aware, even if we must consciously take some fallen thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, that our self-worth is never, ever tied to our function in the Body (it is forever settled- we are forever unconditionally complete in His love) I make no statements about myself in regard to any title or area of service to the Body, other than to say my small part is to share some insights with the beloved Body of Christ as our Head, Jesus Christ, desires to share them.

This section is about some of the things that have been, and are, on His heart in this hour. Many aspects will be repeated and restated as the Lord has laid them on my spirit. These were written and posted on my blog over the course of a year and all bear witness to this very hour.

Repetition, (as I may have mentioned already) is a form of assisting us to get the spiritual truth to drop down into our soul, where we may then yield to what our spirit is leading us to do according to the will of the Holy Spirit.

Please, as with all things, pray about them and see if they bear witness with the same Spirit who dwells powerfully within you. One Body, many parts. One Head. One God. Jesus Christ above all things.

Amen.

Chapter 1

Looking Back at September 11th

I am going to share something that for the past 14 years I have never shared outside my closest counsel.

Let me preface this by saying, some of this may sound odd at best. Let me also say that I hold NO experience of any kind on the same authority as the written Word of God. God alone is our final authority. Jesus Christ is the only atonement for sins. He alone and His accomplished work on the cross is what allows us to be reconciled back to our Heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit can and will speak to us and move through us, but nothing we experience is to re-define the Word of God. The Word alone is our final authority on any and all matters.

I am also compelled to share two other things. First and foremost, I am never offended when someone does not agree or believe what I share or hold as truth. Second, and equally important, feel free to ask me, question me, pull

me aside in email, etc... if something seems amiss. This is scriptural on so many levels.

“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” Amos 3:3

Humbly, I'll begin.

In the days that followed the horrors of the Twin Towers destruction, I was quite angry with the Lord. Why was I not impressed upon to pray for my city, my near kinsman, my lost brothers and sisters? I had a lot of questions, and to be honest I was very...very angry.

And hurt.

“Lord, how did I miss this? Why wouldn't you show me this? I am supposed to stand in the gap for this nation. You told me this many years ago. What the heck...?!” (truth be told, I was a bit more colorful...)

And so I prayed, and fasted and wept, and swore and cried some more. I was very, very angry. And hurt.

Before I go on, I need to explain some things about the Body of Christ. Throughout this book, I have shared with you the scriptural truths that we are complete in His love. Please remember these truths.

How we function in the Body of Christ is completely independent from our self-worth.

Our value (or worth) was established when we personally accepted the gift of Jesus' atonement for our sin and received the Holy Spirit. We are complete. We are loved. We are cherished and adored with a fierce jealousy of love from our Lord.

To the degree that the Body does not agree with these truths is the degree Satan is permitted to use our darkened thinking to cause division and backbiting and slander in the Body of Christ. He is doing a bang up job of it actually, but that time is drawing to a close.

At times the Lord will impress upon me to pray about specific things. This is scriptural. We are commanded throughout the entire word of God to pray for our nation, our leaders, our brothers and our community. We are His ambassadors. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

How He communes with us, or how we are meant to be used as a part of His Body has nothing to do with our worth. The Church must come to understand we are already His righteousness. We are made complete. (2 Corinthians 5:27, Colossians 1:21, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Please, decide to accept this for yourselves.

Back to my story. I had not eaten for a couple of days. I was depressed and sullen. I felt cut off and useless. The morning of 9/11 I could not even get to the city to help out utilizing any of my strengths that come out in those conditions. Reading about other civilians that did manage to sneak through and help only heightened my despondency and pain.

And so, one night during that following 2 weeks, I was headed to bed and with tears in my eyes asked the Lord once more where I had gotten off track. In a gentle, sweet impression in my spirit I finally heard Him speak to me.

"David, this was not your assignment."

I did not like that at all. Nope, not one bit, but I was so broken in heart and mind at this point I almost didn't care.

"Why not Lord? Have I been unfaithful in any way? I'll repent."

I was much younger in the Lord at the time, and He was still working out some issues with me in regard to knowing and understanding His nature. Things were much less clear to me when it came to what I will refer to as prayerful intercession.

Changing subjects a bit, He again spoke to me in such love I could only cry. He began to share with me how the Church is not prepared to answer the burning questions the lost will have. The fear, the anxiety, the trembling, the horror of an unknown future and living in evil times. The Church was not prepared to give answers that flows freely as a result of intimacy with our Savior. So I did the only dumb thing I could think of.

I asked Him to show me the heart of the lost. I asked Him to let me feel what those who are lost feel.

That was the end of the quiet conversation. I was dejected and weary and tired. I had many more questions that would be answered in the days and even years to come, but that night, I wanted nothing but to just sleep for a month. I went to bed.

Later that night I opened my eyes and found myself inside a dark chasm that I knew somehow was a section of a building. I was trapped inside rubble. I could not move. Within this pitch blackness all around me and above me I could hear screams. I didn't know how I got there. I couldn't even remember my name. I only knew I was trapped... and I knew I was going to die. From above me I could hear a terrible rumble as everything around me shook violently. My spirit felt as if it would leap outside my body out of pure terror. A terror that could be felt, and that possessed every single fiber of my being. My mind seemed to explode and I was trying to scream but the depth of terror prevented any words from escaping my mouth. The rumble was louder and louder, until it was absolutely deafening. Finally, in those final seconds, I felt the air and all matter around me collapse and condense under the weight of a black mass. I wanted to gouge my eyes out in fear and terror but there was no time. For the briefest moment, I felt every bone in my body pulverize under this weight, and then...I had memories of a family I do not know. I was thinking of a wife I did not have, and thought of my children that at the time, I was not father to. They were not my thoughts is the best way to describe it... seconds later I was crushed to death in utter darkness. I have no idea how long this went on for. Minutes, hours or

days... I cannot tell. Then suddenly I opened my eyes and only then realized it was what I would call... "a dream."

I dry heaved, wept... dry heaved some more and spent the next day or so mixing it up between pacing the floor, clawing at my face and lying in the fetal position. The Lord and I talked quite a bit during this time. This is how His creation feels. They are without hope. Without love. Without redemption.

Or so they believe.

They need the Church to come down to them, reach out and grab a hold of them. That dreadful, horrifying night for me, in each scenario, I knew I was alone, lost and beyond help. The world needs to know there is a great Rescuer. His name is Jesus.

In the ensuing weeks and months I watched another horror as I witnessed firsthand the "lost" going to church buildings, seeking out Bible studies and asking Christians questions. The answers to their fears and longing went mostly unanswered. The Church was asleep. True conversions and commitments to Christ in the following months and year showed no appreciable change. And why should it? What power of the gospel was moving in the Church in America at the time? Where was our passion, our hope, our identity as a Redeemed child?

Note: God does not kill. When a nation turns from the law of Love, and the precepts of God's nature, that nation allows demonic activity to attack that land.

Sin kills. God heals.

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

It is God's hand of protection that prevents the god of this world from entering in and fulfilling his plans to *steal, kill and destroy*. (John 10:10)

That Hand of divine protection will continue to lift away from this nation until the body of Christ prays, repents, confesses the sin of worldliness, and seeks to walk with the Lord according to His nature. He is holy. We are to live holy. We are NOT going to be perfect. It is a matter of the heart. "Holiness" is not a swear word. "Holiness" is not religion. "Holiness" is fellowship. It is a state of being that is identical in nature to the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan has deceived the Church into thinking it is either an act of self-righteous living to attain to, or it is something that God no longer cares about.

Pastors were lightning quick to lull their congregations back to sleep with words of false security and false rest. I visited a church fellowship one night to share the burden on my heart about the spiritual condition of the Body of Christ, and how the lost need us to stand up and be a witness in these times. This country has turned her back on the morals and love for God's Word. The pastor saw me walk in and immediately began warning his congregation

that anyone who says God had any involvement in the towers falling in any way is demonic. This is God's nation. We are God's anointed. The enemy cannot touch us.

All half-truths... without balance...without discernment. Without love for the lost or the well-being of the flock...I left.

That's OK. God had already impressed upon me not to go anyway. I was in disobedience that night...

The Church has allowed this. We do not pray for our nation. We do not pray for our lost neighbors. We are not asking God to show us areas of our lives we are not living unto Him. We are not repentant toward willful sin. We do not have a hatred toward sin. God's lost sheep, the world, those who have not accepted Christ, are dying and going to hell because of this.

We are called to understand the times. The towers coming down was meant to be a wake-up call for the Church. Those who were shepherds were supposed to help usher the flock into the pasture of prayerful repentance and intercession. Instead, we entered into national pride and arrogance.

"...who say with pride and arrogance of heart, 'The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars.'" Isaiah 9:9

Does that sound familiar? It should. It was announced all throughout the country in the days that followed the tragedy. God bless America.

One of our Presidents, at ground zero wrote this, "We remember, We rebuild. We come back stronger!" We forgot we are born-again Christians called to be a light to America. Instead we began to think of ourselves as Americans... who happen to be born-again.

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20

Have we forsaken this? Or were we never taught this truth?

September 11 is a sign for the Church, not the lost. It is a reminder that we have yet to answer the call of our Redeemer's heart to purify ourselves. He wants to commune with us. He longs to walk with us and share His heart with us. He desires to discuss plans on how His Body is to redeem the world.

This country has, and will continue to be humbled and brought low through the following channels: politically, geo-physically, economically and socially.

This is NOT about works! This is about union. This is NOT about religious piety. This is about allowing the love and purity of Christ to flow through us, to minister to the lost. This is a natural byproduct of us spending time with our first love. This is what we were created for! This is about

love. (2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 John 1:16, Romans 12:2, 1 John 2:15-17, John 17:16)

The Father loves us so much He asked His Son to die.

The Son loves His children so much He was tortured for us.

The Holy Spirit loves us so much He left heaven to make His dwelling place IN us.

I did not want to write this. I wanted to write on some other things the Body of Christ needs encouragement in. But these are the times we live in. We must understand the times. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Lord worked it out so that my wedding anniversary is September 11th.

He longs for his pure spotless Bride. He longs for every part of you. Things will continue to get tougher here in America. We, the Church, get to decide when we will take our place as the ambassadors of Heaven and walk in spirit and in truth with Him.

This country, and the lost in this nation, are waiting for us.

Chapter 2

Rending Our Hearts and Not Our Minds

I have been questioned a lot these days on the times. What is the future of our nation? What is the future of the Body of Christ here in America? Will we continue to live freely or will we become like so many other nations, where Christians are being tortured and killed for sharing the love of Jesus and the Good News?

Is America somehow exempt from the word of God and what the Body of Christ was commissioned to do until Jesus' return? Well... the Word does not mention any sort of exemption for a nation called "The Land of the Free."

There is an Awakening taking place in this nation. The call is going forth to all the ends of this country to begin to seek the Lord in prayer, turn away from any worldliness of heart, and live for Him.

NOTE: Worldliness of heart is an inner issue. Cleansing ourselves from what we "do" or "don't do" will be the by-product of true repentance, NOT what causes it.

Recognition of an area of our life that separates us from experiencing God in that area brings life in that area. A by-product of this spiritual process is a changed outward appearance. This is foundational, basic principles of the teachings of Jesus.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean." Matthew 23:27

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

Agreement with what His Word says... and then acting upon it, changes the condition of our heart. Instead of looking to the dead, carnal mind (which is corrupt and cannot be renewed), we must turn to God's nature, His heart, His thoughts on that subject. This is what it means to turn to His Word.

This is repentance. Repentance is NOT a return to Law. That is legalism. Legalism breeds death. Repentance is to

turn from those things which are grievous to the Lord's heart, and agree with His mind on that matter.

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, said he to you; but his heart is not with you.” Proverbs 23:7

Why is this verse repeated so many times? Because:

In order to know His mind and heart on a matter, we have His written word. This is our plumb-line. Any word we believe He speaking to us that is outside His written word must conform to the written word or it must be rejected. As mentioned earlier, our soul is the gatekeeper that determines the way we will interact and relate to God.

The time has come for the Body to seek God's heart, know His heart, and walk in His heart. In ALL matters. not mentally, but with our full heart.

Then we can begin to return to being the light to the lost in this nation. Only then will our prayers be heard when we call upon the Lord to move upon the hearts of our lost neighbors in this country. Then we can move in the power of the Holy Spirit as we speak in agreement with His word.

Only then will a nation repent.

Let me scripturally clarify what I mean by "Christian." I am referring to what the Bible says a "Christian" is: *one who has acknowledged salvation is a gift, cannot be earned, that we deserve spiritual death and freely accept the gift of the Holy*

Spirit which gives us eternal life, when we sincerely receive Jesus into our heart. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:17, Romans 10:9, Ephesians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22)

Unless this body of Christians here in America begin to move forward with this process, we will continue to see the affairs of this country get darker and darker.

This is Biblical. Why? For one thing we are called to be a light to the lost. The Father wants His children back. It is our job to do this. We are His ambassadors. Furthermore, that which opposes His nature, is in violation of His nature. Though His children are not in any way repulsive, the sin is. This is why Satan was thrown out of heaven.

“The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.” Romans 8:7

“For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” 1 Peter 4:17

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

The process, though it must be heartfelt, (Joel 2:13) is not difficult. All fullness is found in Him. All pain, sorrow,

sickness, fear, insecurity and pride is washed away in His presence and by feeling His heart. The things of the world that pull at us will not even be a memory other than to look back and wonder why we waited.

Until the Church (the word "church" means the organic body of Christ- not a building) returns with all her heart, the United States of America will continue to lose her peace, prosperity and her moral compass.

“You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost its savor, how shall it be salted? It is thereafter good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” Matthew 5:13

Satan is trampling over the souls of the lost in this country. He has introduced and has been advancing his nature and will continue throughout this land. Anywhere a reconciled child of God is not fellowshiping in Truth with Him, we allow Satan to rob us of what is our inheritance.

This is not a message of condemnation. We are His righteousness. We are His redeemed. We are His blameless child. These are our positional standings in His eyes. Relationally though, we have chosen as a body here in America to reject our identity, and follow the heart of the lost. It is simply time to arise and take our place in the Kingdom.

Until we do, here are some things the lost, in ignorance to His goodness, and without the ability to walk in His truth (Romans 8:7) will allow Satan to do to this land:

Things to look for:

We will continue to see a weakening of the US dollar. We will experience a second falling of the real estate market. We will see God continually be removed farther and farther from our nation's identity. Our children will be deliberately exposed to more and more darkness through the school systems. Lifestyles that are now accepted will not only begin to be taught, they will be encouraged to your children in school. We will turn our back on Israel. We will experience greater and greater terror under foreign acts of evil coming to our land. Christianity will no longer be tolerated. It will be seen as a hate religion and become severely oppressed. Geo-physical events will spike, causing loss of life and contribute to the continued weakening of our dollar.

NOTE: Since I first wrote on this a couple of years ago on my website, many of the things cited above have already begun, and have been escalating. They will continue to increase in intensity.

This is not fear based. This is recognizing the times. Many troubling times have befallen humanity in the past. To ignore the signs of the times is not faith. Ignoring the signs is either fear based or pride based. When the Christians living within a nation refuse to take their place as the light of the world, and instead turn to pleasures, riches and are consumed with the same worries and concerns that the world is, we are no longer operating by Kingdom principles. We are no longer touching our Father's heart and walking by His mind.

NOTE: There is no fear in love, no matter how stern the pruning or chastening.

In His intense love for us, He is allowing this nation to be humbled in order to arrest the attention of the Body of Christ. It is simply a matter of returning to our First Love.

Please, there is no condemnation when a Father calls for His children to return to Him. There is no condemnation when a parent screams at the child playing in the street. The Father is calling us back to His table to sit with us and know how wonderful we are in His eyes.

This is not a call to works. Outward appearance means nothing unless it is a fruit of walking in His presence through time spent with Him. We are citizens in Heaven, meant to enjoy the fullness of life here... as we walk it out with hearts inclined toward Him.

It is not time to "go" to church. It is not time to "read the Bible." It is not time to "be a better Christian." It is time to come home. He wants our hearts... that is all. First and always and forever.

The Church, in unity, needs to:

Seek His Face - We need to ask God in what areas we have allowed the spirit of this world to creep into our hearts.

Repent - This word means "to turn or change direction." It is not an emotional response. The word is a verb. We need

to hear His voice and then be obedient to what He reveals to us needs to change.

Take Action - We need to act upon our beliefs in love. The Church was never meant to be silent. This generation has become afraid of "offending" and have gotten the false notion that walking in love means not offending. We have allowed ourselves to become intimidated by an outspoken minority. And so we have kept quiet. That outspoken minority needs our love, and they need to hear the Truth we have to share. Pray for our leaders. Don't curse them. They are lost. Pray for our lost brothers and sisters of the world. Pray they see and hear and accept the goodness of His love that begins at the cross.

Again:

"If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

Together. Let's go home.

Chapter 3

Knowing Our Purpose

"Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." 2 Corinthians 2:16

We have been given the ability to walk in His thoughts, feel what He feels and abide in His perfect peace and joy. In order to do this, we must understand our purpose.

"Without prophetic vision, the people shall perish, but he that keeps the law is blessed." Proverbs 29:18

Let me take a moment to express the heart of God here as God expresses Himself throughout Scripture. "Prophetic vision" is simply to understand the heart, mind and intent of our Father in Heaven. "Law" refers not to rules, but to His heart and nature. "The law" was given to reveal our need for the Holy Spirit to empower us to live in His nature. That empowerment is given when the Holy Spirit enters us. The Holy Spirit enters us and gives us life and reconciliation when we recognize our condition before the eyes of a loving and perfect and holy Creator... and receive

that gift. (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, Ephesians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22)

If a nation does not know this, that nation will perish. If the Body of Christ (those who have once accepted this) begin to turn from this truth, that Body will be chastened... in His love.

We are living in troubling times.

This is not the first time that America has endured difficulties. To understand what is truly going on though requires the Church of God to walk in the mind of Christ.

“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond servant of Christ.”
Galatians 1:10

“Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13

“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 5:20

As I type this and as you read this, those who profess Jesus Christ, are being tortured and killed all over the world. It is the love of Christ that compels them to share the “good news.” This is a hard reality. We are not yet seeing this in

America. Additionally, and by in large, the Body of Christ has been content to go on her 10-day missionary trips to rather friendly countries. I have not yet heard of too many trips being planned that send born-again to countries such as Nigeria, Tunisia, Syria, Iran.... the list goes on and on.

This is not about condemnation or superficial judgment. This is about Christians in America beginning to stand up, so that we might get back down on our knees, and repent of our own distractions, so that we may live a life truly grounded in the love and power that comes from a relationship that is resting in Jesus.

This is NOT about *works*.

The Bible doesn't state we are not to enjoy this life. In fact, quite the opposite. Life was meant to be lived, enjoyed, and our interests expressed... *with Him*.

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." Philipians 2:3-5

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

This last verse is NOT talking about self-righteousness. "Doing" good deeds is, well... good, but this is not in fact our calling. This is our ordained bi-product. Please recognize this.

NOTE: We are called to Himself. We are called to walk in intimate friendship with Him. In doing so, we will reflect His love, walk as He walked and by default, be children that show and express His good works through us.

This is true life. This is what we are called to. This is the meaning of the verse that states,

"For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also His offspring." Acts 17:28

Living a life in Christ, means enjoying all the expressions of His divine nature...through you. Living a life in Christ is simple. It means to walk in a state of open invitation. Whatever it is you enjoy, invite Him in.

But...

Before we can do this, we, as the Church, need to repent of living for ourselves. We are meant to live a life as His Son and daughter concerned about the things He is concerned about.

I believe right now He is concerned about how His Church is going to rescue His lost sons and daughters; those who have not yet received Christ's forgiveness, from death.

This has always been His heart, the Word says. This is why He died! We are to call "good" what He calls "good." We are to love those who do not yet know Him as Savior and bring them to Him. This is accomplished in so many different expressions... we are all different. He moves through us all differently, but we are all meant to be a light.

We were not created to live for ourselves. The Body of Christ needs to repent of this fallen mindset and "put on" the mind of Christ.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

God's Word is not a rule book. It is diary, written to His beloved children showing them the way back home.

Jesus is meant to be our standard. His nature, His love, His precepts determine what is right and wrong. This country is forsaking the Word of God as our standard of right and wrong more than at any other time in the history of this great nation.

"When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers, but a ruler with discernment and knowledge maintains order." Proverbs 28:2

Right now, the god of selfishness, the god of perversion, the god of lust, power, greed, fear and hatred rule the minds and hearts of many in America. Jesus Christ is no

longer the head of the United States. We have rejected Him as our One Ruler. The Church has allowed this. The Church is also guilty of this herself.

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.” Matthew 24:12

The love of His beloved Church is growing increasingly cold. More than ever in my life I am seeing, reading and hearing first-hand those who profess to be born-again Christians speak of tolerance toward sin. Where is our passion for truth? For holiness? For righteousness, or for the lost to be saved?

NOTE: We are meant to love only the sinner. We are not to tolerate the sin. We love the sinner. It is demonstrating God’s love toward all His children that brings them to Christ (Romans 2:4, Matthew 5:16, 1 John 4:10, John 8:7) but we are to hate the sin.

“Save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.” Jude 23

We were never meant to ignore sin. We were never meant to tolerate it in our mindsets... We were meant to identify it, call it out as such, and then show the people their need for the Savior.

This is why Christ died for us. Jesus died so that we can show the person a way out of their sin. This is love. The torture of the cross is love.

Stating that "God is Love" and therefore He sees no sin is blasphemy. There... I said it. This is the great deception of this Age. This is the spirit of antichrist. And it is a predominant mindset found in many of our pulpits, pews, congregations, worship, thinking and living rooms.

"When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong."
Ecclesiastes 8:11

"Therefore the law is slacked, and justice does never go forth: for the wicked does surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds." Habakkuk 1:4

Be honest. When was the last time you sat in a fellowship meeting and heard the words *sin, repentance, holiness* or *righteous judgment*?

Now, I will admit many have spoken on this without any clue whatsoever on how these topics are in reality, an aspect of His love. That does not give us an excuse to ignore the heart of the Gospel.

The Body of Christ here in America needs to begin aligning ourselves with the mind of Christ. We need to get back into the Word and recall our purpose. We have lost our way. We need to get back to the vision of what this nation was called to be.

We were given the mind of Christ when we accepted Him as our personal Savior. We were then given an invitation

to enter into the most intimate and powerful union ever created. The union of true fellowship with the God of... Everything!

Think on this: The God that created Super Novas... and flowering trees; the Master who made Pleiades... and honeybees... wants to talk with you and enjoy you. In order to do this, we must begin to place Him first in our hearts.

The persecution and death that is all around us is heading toward America.

But there is still time.

In love, we have been extended time, but the time is short. We can still turn America around.

I know I am repeating myself here in regard to what I wrote in the earlier chapter.

But...

I am, and will continue in such love and affection and tenderness of His heart, to admonish the Body to do 3 things:

1. Repent - Stop living for ourselves only. We have begun to embrace and excel in doctrines that make God out to be a personal vending machine for whatever our heart fancies. Prosperity is meant to be a bi-product of our life in Him, not the purpose. - The word "repent" means "to turn

or change direction." It is not an emotional response. The word is a verb. We need to hear His voice and then be obedient to what He reveals to us needs to change.

2. Seek His Face - Begin asking Him what is on His heart. What does He care about? What is this life journey, that is meant to be filled with joy and peace and fullness, actually look like when we walk it out *in Him*? If you are still in the process of learning how to recognize the way He speaks to your spirit, that's OK. We have His written Word. It's all in there, and it is a safe place to start.

3. Take Action - We need to act upon our beliefs... in love. The Church was never meant to be silent. I will repeat what I wrote earlier. This generation has become afraid of "offending" and have gotten the false notion that walking in love means not offending. We have allowed ourselves to become intimidated by an outspoken minority. And so we have kept quiet. That outspoken minority needs our love, and they need to hear the Truth we have to share.

We must return to His heart and His mind. America can still fulfill her call to be a light to the world. We can be a nation that proclaims God's goodness and enjoy His protection against the rising evil that is speeding us to the fulfillment of end times prophecy, and Jesus' return. We can still enter these "last" days as His salt and His light, walking in His power to heal and love and reconcile the world to Himself.

This also means interceding for our nation and those lost. We need to begin praying for those who do not know good

from evil. We have the spirit of God in us. The "lost" do not. Stop holding them to a standard. They need the Spirit of God in order to understand the nature of God and be empowered to live a life that is in alignment with His nature.

Please, the time is come...

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." Romans 13:12

Chapter 4

The Great Pruning

“...every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” John 15:2

There is a great pruning that has already begun to take place in the United States. The Lord is looking to set His house in order. We are His house. Pruning begins with the House of God, and from there we will be the spotless Bride purified in heart, deed, thought and action - equipped with power and answers to the troubling questions the lost are already seeking answers for.

This nation is lost. The Church is supposed to have the answers. The Church, by in large, is without vision, without focus, and without power. We have turned aside to the things of this world. Distracted and fractured, judgmental and self-focused, we are not walking in purity, unity, and love with one another. We have fallen victim to ourselves and ignored the warning of Jesus:

“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” Mark 4:19

The Lord is turning up the heat to remove the dross in the Church. All things that run contrary to His heart need to be refined and removed. In His love He will begin purifying His Church.

The season is upon us for this generation of the Body of Christ in America to be unified, in heart and mind and spirit, eagerly listening for His voice for direction on how to lead this nation back to Him.

This country is under the refinement of God. She has turned away from her calling and God is calling this nation back to repentance. Purification is first needed in the Body.

“For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” 1 Peter 4:17

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:8

This season is a season where Christ is addressing the issues of the heart of His children that are still steeped in the world. In His love and passion for both His Bride and

the lost He will begin to purify the Church and then the lost. It's His hand upon us that, in love, produces purity and righteousness in our thinking and actions. This actually has already begun.

NOTE: There is a difference in our positional standing (*who God says we are as result of the what Jesus did on the cross*) and our relational standing (*how we chose to relate to God, ourselves, and others*).

We HAVE become the righteousness of Christ (Colossians 1:21-22). This is positional in the eyes of our God. How we live though, is a choice.

We either live out of that righteousness, or we chose to live out of the carnal man, which we died to. This is coming in the form of trials and pruning. Once more will He shake the foundations so that all that remains is Him alone and Him in us.

Pruning is Love.

“The sufferings that you are enduring are for your discipline. God is dealing with you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are not disciplined - and everyone undergoes discipline - then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.” Hebrews 12:7

The Church has allowed the lost to take this country to a state of rejection against the principles and precepts of God as never before seen. The Church, through prayer and

action, in love, is always meant to guide and steer the actions and future of this nation. We have fallen asleep and let the world, the lost, do it instead. We need to repent of this and begin praying for refinement in the Church body, and for this nation to once again turn back to God.

NOTE: God is never angry with His creation. That wrath was satisfied at the Cross. His anger is kindled against the things that oppose His nature. If you disagree with this, please read the book of Hebrews. Jesus paid for all sin of all Ages. Wrath is poured out on sin, not the person.

We are not called to be angry at the *lost*. They do not have the Holy Spirit in them. Their minds are blinded. It is the Kingdom revealed to them, through the Church, that brings them to repentance.

“...and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?” Jonah 4:11

“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” Romans 2:4

It is the power of our prayer that breaks the bondage of the enemy over a people and land. We are the warriors. Those who need Christ are our brothers and sisters that are prisoners of war. There is only one enemy: the devil. We exercise dominion over him in order to release the will of

God on earth. That will, according to the Great Commission, is to be a light to those who are lost, and proclaim the message of salvation to our neighbor first, and then the world. (Mark 16:15-18, Matthew 28:19)

The future of this country is in the hands of the Church. The time is come when the Church is to wake up, seek the face of our Savior and ask Him to bring to light all areas we are not living in Him.

Truth offends. There is no way around it. It offends the sin nature in people, but it also brings light to the person and offers them the gift of His goodness. There is a difference between being offensive and offending. Speak from a position of love, not anger, not judgment. The Church can only do this to the degree we have responded to the call of the Holy Spirit as He leads us to live a life *IN Him*.

In Him is all comfort, ability and power. This is not a message of condemnation. There is no condemnation in Christ. This is a call to repentance. This is a call to change. This is a call for the Church, His Body, to rise up, shake off our slumber and seek Him in Spirit and in Truth.

This nation's future is in the hands of the Church. Those whose minds are corrupt need to hear the truth. The angry need us. The scared, lost children in this nation have only us to turn to... or further lies from the enemy.

This is our generation. This is our watch.

Please... join with me as we repent.

Chapter 5

Casting Down Fear

"Love never fails." 1 Corinthians 13:8

I love that truth. Such beauty and passion and warmth and power in it. So why do I contend with it?

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me." 1 Corinthians 13:11

The days are upon us where we are being called upon by the hand of God to truly examine what we are believing. One of the reasons so many children of God are perplexed and confused is that those of us who are called to serve amongst the Body as elders are not in agreement with the mind, will, heart and timing of God. This may sound a bit odd, but it is easy enough to understand why this is happening. It is cited in the following verse.

**“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part...” 1
Corinthians 13:9**

We are all called to enter into deep, wonderful rest in our relationship with our God and Savior. The One who calls us "Friend" has nothing better to do than just sit and talk with us. Sound odd? Think on a verse, or passage or context where anything about this whole entire journey is aimed at anything other than Jesus working out all things in order to get us back at the Father's Table.

"The Great Rescue," I have heard it articulated as. Nothing truer could be stated. It was enacted the moment God spoke to Adam about his rebellion, and it has been unfolding ever since, and we are in the final acts of this Great Rescue.

As we continue to spend time with Him and touch His heart, the things that oppose His Word begin to come to light. Ultimately those false beliefs are meant to be cast down and despised.

**“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”
Ephesians 6:13**

When Paul wrote about taking up the armor of God he was not telling us to quote Ephesians 6:13... quoting out loud that you have taken up the shield of faith does NOT mean you have in fact done that.

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”
2 Corinthians 10:5

Ephesians 6:13 tells you *what to do*. 2 Corinthians 10:5 tells you *how to do it!*

We do this by, well... doing it. The shield of faith is the shield of our beliefs. Remember the word "faith" means "to believe." What we believe will either be the truth of God, or the lies of the carnal mind, which is ruled by Satan.

We quote Ephesians 6:13 in order to remind ourselves to perform 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Putting on the armor of God and walking in it is this:

Agreeing with His word on any and all subjects. It is performed by doing what 2 Corinthians 10:5 states - *not* by quoting Ephesians 6:13 to yourself.

Here is the problem. Once we have begun to do this, it is very easy for us to begin to drift from this principle of living IN Him. *The most dangerous person in the Body of Christ is the one who knows the truth, has walked the truth... and then begins to drift from it.* These mature believers have a God-given place to speak into the lives of younger, less understanding members of the body. This is causing much damage and confusion in this hour.

Let me reiterate a principle of God's nature. God is love. Love takes on many forms in different seasons. Mercy is love. Gifts are love. Discipline and pruning is love. Judgment is love.

Love toward sin?? No. It is His love, His goodness, that draws us away from the self destructive effects of sin.

"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up." Hosea 8:7

"Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Galatians 6:8

What you invest time, energy, and agreement in thinking, will produce a harvest. That harvest will be the fulfillment of the nature of that seed. The choice is ours.

So having said that, if we lean upon the Lord, there is peace. Our minds are to be stayed on our relationship with Him and ultimately on His heart, His voice and simply getting to know him.

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." Philippians 4:8

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you: because he trusts in you." Isaiah 26:3

“Brothers and sisters, do not be alarmed to the point of fear. Perfect love casts out all fear.” 1 John 4:18

The Greek word for "perfect" is: (a) *complete in all its parts*, (b) *full grown, of full age*, (c) *specially of the completeness of Christian character*.

Are there troubling times of pruning and some severe events upon us? Yes, I believe so with all my heart. Has the Lord spoken to me about His pruning and discipline that is coming and already upon his beloved Church? Yes, indeed.

Am I afraid? Not at all. Not one bit.

And so here we come full circle. Those who meditate on God's love may go to an excess and say that Love means there is no severity... no extreme measure in which He is willing to take to shake us from our worldly, carnal minded outlook. This is not found in practice in Scripture.

Every single second you read this... His children are dying and placing themselves in Hell by rejecting the gift of salvation. Every second. Hell. How much, in His love, is He willing to do to get us back on track to living as Children of God, spotless and with pure hearts (not perfect, but pure in our desire) seeking to walk with Him and rescue His lost children?

There is no place for fear. Fear may come in the form of denouncing judgment or any major "event." Or... it may

come in the form of believing such things will transpire and not understanding that our Dad in Heaven is a loving good Dad that cares intensely for us.

God does not kill. God judges. That time and period of God's government is coming. The Lord, now, in His holiness, and love, is disciplining us for the sin within His Church. This pruning comes in the form of His hand of protection lifting. When it lifts, Satan comes in to rob, steal and destroy.

There is so much grace in this process. *So much.* And, for those who are in alignment with His heart already, that means there is covenant protection and rest. Do not be so concerned about some of the "contradictions" from different voices. Look to Him. Enjoy Him. Seek Him. Do so in love. Do so in peace. Do so in joy.

The same Shepherd of Psalm 91 in the old covenant is inside you. Rest in His love.

"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" John 14:2

"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he browses among the lilies." Song of Solomon 6:3

"I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me." Song of Solomon 7:10

Children of God. My beloved brothers and sisters... He has called you into His hidden chambers. You are complete. You are loved. You are the apple of His eye. Stop being so afraid. Stop striving. This life is but a vapor. Do not fear the calamity that is around and coming upon us in this hour. Do not fear those who may not perceive the times. Love them. Bear witness to them of God's goodness. Draw them in with tender kindness. Rest in knowing what it means to be the righteousness of Christ. Find out what it means to enter into His "Sabbath rest."

Grow in understanding of His heart. Live out 2 Corinthians 10:5 every moment.
And then...

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." Matthew 10:8

We can only give what we have. What do we have these days - a spirit of fear or a revelation of God's love? We are called to understand the times we live in. The greater the calamity, the greater the release of God's power and love to purify His Church and redeem the lost. It is time to take a serious inventory and locate our minds, our hearts and our beliefs. What are we meditating on? Are we focused on God's redemptive plan? Or are we focused on our own fear-based preservation? We are called to lay down our lives for our brother. We are called to lay down our lives for our sister. We are not called to hide under a rock. We are the salt and light of the world. Are we searching for that "safe place" to hide that light?

We are the sons of God. We are meant to be the manifest presence of the kingdom of heaven upon earth. We are the generation that the enemy fears rising up, lest we take our place in the kingdom. Let those clothed in the putrid stench of Satan's deception see the glory of the One who died for us all. The one thrown out of heaven has mocked the Savior of our souls.

Shall we not go up and rescue them? Shall we not rise up amidst the storms and trials and judgments sent upon the sin of this world and snatch our lost family out of Hell's grip?

“But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.’” Luke 2:11

Go rescue His lost children...

...just as someone rescued you.

Chapter 6

What is Scriptural Revival?

A cry will go forth... and truth be told it is already upon us. But it is not the cry of our heart that is being heard by those who discern the truth. It is the cry of His heart.

He is calling His Church to come forth. He is calling His Church to return to her commission and to her First Love.

"Revival."

The words will soon be on the mouths of many believers across this nation. This time is coming quickly. Those within His Church are waking up, and will begin to seek the face of God and recognize our nation is in trouble.

I believe a Great Awakening will come upon His Church... *starting with a Remnant.* Those who answer the call will learn how to move in the Holy Spirit with incredible power and holiness, that will overshadow every

counterfeit that has been robbing the Church from her God given gifts of the Spirit.

But...

"Revival! Revival!!" Will be the cry of the land from fellowships all over the country. Soon, we will see the Body of Christ seem to rise up and in one accord seek to pray the Holy Spirit down on our fellowships and in our towns. We will ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us the form of the latter rains. We will ask for His anointing. "Use me Lord. Use me!"

There is only one problem.

This is not birthed from the Throne-room of God.

Let me explain.

More than ever before, the Body of Christ needs to seek the mind of God and His timing in all things. Nowhere in the New testament are we instructed to "call down" the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does it say to pray the Holy Spirit will "bring revival." It isn't possible. He is already on the Earth. He lives inside His Church Body. He is already here. He cannot come again. He works through us.

We often like to quote Old Testament verses to support this idea of the Holy Spirit coming down and bringing revival. The only scriptural Revival that the Word talks about was prophesied under the Old Covenant. This was before the Holy Spirit came to live in us. This is when His

presence would "come down" and visit. In the Old Covenant He would come and go. This was not good enough for God. He created man for intimate fellowship... not visits.

This is the main thrust behind every prophetic utterance in the Old Testament: A new covenant is coming. A better one. One where we *become* the Temple.

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Ezekiel 36:27

"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,' declares the LORD. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.'" Jeremiah 31:33

The reason there is so much confusion in the Church Body today is we simply have not been taught the New Covenant. We accepted Christ as Savior, but we do not understand, really, what the new, better covenant is.

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" 1 Corinthians 6:19

"For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them and I

will be their God and they will be my people.” 2
Corinthians 6:16

“Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'” Galatians 4:6

We need to stop quoting, meditating on, and inaccurately overlaying the Old Covenant onto our Spirit-filled walk. We think of the Holy Spirit in terms of coming down, and being among us. We quote the “fire of Elijah,” and the glory of the Lord “descending” upon the mountain, and we too pray and long for this. Here is the problem (or should I say, the solution) - *The glory is in you.*

The Holy Spirit is found in only one place. Inside you. We “find” Him in our prayer closet. Alone and without the emotional fanfare of pumped up worship music and emotional exhortations and preaching.

“But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” John 16:13

Just before Jesus fulfilled the requirement for our redemption, He reminded the disciples of what the prophecies said. *The Holy Spirit was coming!!*

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Luke 24:29

We ask for anointing? We should perhaps examine that doctrine as well. "Lord, send the anointing!" We cry. We beg and plead for the Spirit. This is a result of unbiblical teachings that have propagated the Church and taken root in our minds and culture.

"As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." 1 John 2:27

This was fulfilled at Pentecost, brothers and sisters. We have access to this now. We have an anointing that abides. Did we forget that Peter quoted this verse on the day the Holy Spirit came and instituted the New Covenant?

"It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days." Joel 2:28-29

Read Acts 2:14-18 and see how Peter quoted Joel 2:28-29.

So why are we still quoting this to God as if we are going to get Him to do something? The Holy Spirit doesn't come a second time. He never left. He has been inside the Church, giving Her access to union with the Head for 2,000 years.

This is the Spirit that is now IN you!

Do we still not understand? We ARE His Kingdom represent-atives. We are His Kingdom on Earth. His ambassadors. His Body. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Nowhere... nowhere... did Jesus say after the promised Holy Spirit comes, to then pray He will somehow move independently from His Church. Nowhere does the New Testament state that we are to ask for the Holy Spirit to move across a backslidden country and somehow, in some mystic way, spread over the airways like the Angel of the Lord did in Egypt.

If we want to talk Biblical revival what we are really saying is we are going to discuss the scriptural concept of reviving something. "Revival" is defined: *The act or an instance of reviving, an instance of returning to life or consciousness; restoration of vigor or vitality.*

What are we really saying when we admit we need revival? What needs to be revived? Where did the Church go from His presence? If the Kingdom is inside us, and we have access to the Holy of Holies, how is it we are in need of something more?

Galatians is a solid place to start in looking for the answer.

"Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Galatians 6:8

Please....please... take note here Paul is addressing born-again believers. The "eternal life" referenced here is not the life to come, but rather the Kingdom life we have access to. It's His ever existent, always and forever, *dunamus* power and life!

If we sow to this world, we reap the fruit of this world. Do we lack the power of the Spirit of God in our lives? Do we yet know what that should look like in our personal walk? The New Covenant is full of scripture that tells us how the Holy Spirit is longing and yearning to flow through us to minister the power of the Kingdom. Take some time to read the Acts of the Apostles. They flowed in their intimacy with Jesus Christ and as a result the power of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere they went they brought the Kingdom and released the Kingdom. It wasn't about where they "go to church." It was about the condition of their personal relationship with their Messiah, and the promised Holy Spirit that lived inside them.

Brothers and sisters. You have the same Spirit inside you. You can do the same things that any other born-again child of God did or does. Or is God a liar after all?

We have replaced our prayer times and hunger for His intimacy with "anointed" preaching and a decent portion of principled teaching on the "do's and dont's" of our Christian walk. The power of our Christian "walk" is not in our head. It's not in our self-controlled conduct. It is birthed from union and intimate time spent in the presence of the Lord, one on one. If we seek Him, we would not need to read about our purpose, or how to achieve joy, or

how to be the best you can be... all these things are an overflow of walking in Kingdom life.

This is where holiness is worked out. This is where He convicts us of hidden sins and the rebellion of contending with His word. This is where He reveals to us we are His redeemed and that our self-worth is complete in Him and Him alone. This is where we learn to walk in the Kingdom authority, dominion and power that we were commissioned to walk in.

This is where repentance is worked out.

I realize this is not fun for the Body of Christ here in America. Is it pleasant to anyone, really?

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”
Hebrews 12:11

“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.” 1 Peter 4:1

“For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” 1 Peter 4:17

The chastening of the Lord reaps the Kingdom of Heaven. It produces His nature. Righteousness, in our own being.

We are forever seen as righteous, but to bring the Kingdom into this realm means *possessing its fruit in our lives and walking in it*. After walking in it, we are told to *give it to the lost*. This is His Kingdom power, manifested in whatever way He chooses to move through us... if we allow Him to.

This is what the Lord is calling His Bride to. He loves you. He gave everything to you. It's all found in Him. Seek His face as in the days of old when we first rejoiced that we were no longer bound for Hell. The fullness of a life being walked out in Him and with Him above all things has no comparison to this world.

There are simply no words... but I shall try.

Ever see His eyes? Have you wondered what it feels like to exchange Kingdom love for one another in a stare? (What exactly is Kingdom love?) Imagine for a moment a scenario where you are just with Him. You share something you relish with all your heart. A song, or painting or certain instrument you can hear playing in your head all day long, perhaps. Or maybe it's something along completely different lines. Dawn, crashing waves, the tall grass that grows after the summer harvest... Ever ask Him what He thinks about the setting sun you are staring into halfway through a cross country trip in a "faith" car? Now picture a Person submersed in your interests. Nothing else exists... just you and Him. He tells you something He loves about how He made you (yet not with words and not with thoughts exactly)...

And then, abruptly... you turn and see someone at the cash register where you are paying for your gas. The Lord starts to ask you - *give them My Love*, but you are already walking toward that person because you can feel your Father's heart and see what He is doing in Heaven already....

Ah... but there are so many ways to give His love, aren't there...?

He is calling His children to Himself. This nation needs a pure and spotless Bride, whose heart beats for only one thing... to spend time with Him. This is what releases fire upon the hearts of the lost. This is what turns the lost to Christ. Nowhere... nowhere, do the Scriptures say we are to bring the lost to our fellowships. We are to go out and release upon them the love of the Kingdom. Fellowship is meant to hone our gifts. But... it is the landscape of the world where we are meant to utilize them to set the captives free.

This cannot be faked. We can only give from the outflow of what we are abiding in.

"Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'" Acts 3:6

The Church has become so fiercely loyal to her pastors and teachers. We praise them. We speak of the amazing depth of their teachings. Do we speak of our Savior the same way? Can we even relate to Jesus the same way? Does His Spirit teach us in our prayer and study time? If the

majority of our learning is coming during a Sunday/Wednesday gathering more than our own intimacy with the Lord... there is a disconnect somewhere. It is no wonder we are so loyal...

This is not about "doing." This is not about "works." This is about relationship. No pastor, no elder, teacher, apostle or prophet (do we even believe in all these functions anymore?). How does the Holy Spirit even manifest Himself within the Church body through the serving of the prophetic office, or the apostolic calling today? And where are these members of the Body of Christ? What are they doing? (Sorry, I digress...) None of this is meant to take the place of our relationship with Jesus Christ. He is our Head. He is our Companion. His Spirit is our Comforter and Power. (Acts 1:8, Romans 8:11)

Since Pentecost, we have the Holy Spirit inside us. We too, are given a choice: seek relationship and life in Christ, or walk according to the carnal-minded man and the dead things of the fallen world.

"...the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Mark 4:19

Hmmm... but now we are beginning to discuss the idea of repenting from things that are of the world. By in large, the Church in America does not like to discuss such things. Not many fellowships care much to discuss holiness, and sin. Is there another way around these uncomfortable aspects of our relationship with our Savior? Oh, yes. Let's

agree to pray for the Holy Spirit to move instead. Let's call it "revival." Why examine ourselves when we can just put the responsibility on the Lord instead? Too easy.... We speak of an unbiblical concept of revival. We twist and mix Old Covenant theology, we ignore the Great Commission and create our own false doctrines that are now being taught and accepted without searching the Scriptures. The reason is simple enough... and easy one to fix. Stop being afraid of accountability to God. Stop being afraid to give up the things of this world.

He has, and always will, call for His Bride to come to holiness and righteous living and repent of the spirit of worldliness. He is never calling for revival. He is calling for us to come home. Jesus gave us a commission and then told us to wait until the Holy Spirit comes to abide in us, in order to be equipped to fulfill that commission. That was 2,000 years ago.

Do a search on every "move" of the Holy Spirit. Search out the true history of all the "revivals" that took place in the world. Read the diaries and the biographies of the men and women used of God to shake the nations. Jesus had much to say about His Church... and continues to draw us to Him through repentance.

"Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God." Revelation 3:2

"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen!"

Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” Revelation 2:4-5

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.” Revelation 3:19

Revival starts with repentance. Revival starts with a return to holiness. Revival is the bi-product of returning our hearts back to our First Love. It is how the Church becomes "revived." The Holy Spirit doesn't come to bring revival. That is a false doctrine not found anywhere in New Testament Scripture. The only reference to God coming is Jesus in regard to His Second Return.

We are the ones that come. We are the ones that return. We turn back to Him.

How does one spell “revival” in Greek? I don't know.... I never looked it up. But in English it's always translated the same way.

R - E - P - E - N - T - A - N - C - E

We are not called to pray for revival. You will have no New Testament Scripture to stand on. We are called to get our hearts right with God. We are called to judge ourselves and let Him judge us. (1 Corinthians 11:31, Luke 12:57, 1 Corinthians 4:3)

To judge means - *“to separate, discern, distinguish.”*

We are called to do this in regard to the things that hinder us from enjoying the fullness of our relationship with Father God.

We are His ambassadors. The Church. There is no plan B. This nation needs us to repent and walk with Him as in the Garden. Only then will the lost repent. Only in this way may this once Godly nation still be saved from complete ruin.

Brothers and sisters of our Father's Kingdom. He loves you... deeply, intensely, passionately, and without regret or remorse or the conditional condemnation / acceptance we learned from our youth. You are His beloved, and He is ours. The time is not coming for the church to pray for revival. It is time to ask Him to judge our hearts. His judgments are an expression of His love, not anger.

See what happens after that...

Chapter 7

Accepting His Invitations

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock" Rev 3:20

The body of Christ is at a crossroads here in The United States.

Grow deeper in Him... or grow cold.

Dad has been dismantling me these days. Even as I have been praying for, and encouraging those around me who are allowing Father God to move His Church deeper into Himself, so too have I been, shall we say... "a mess." This is more than fine with me. What else is there if there is no deep communion with my God? To whom shall I go to instead?

As odd as it may sound on the surface, the pain, angst and "dying" I am experiencing is due to primarily one thing: I recently accepted a beautiful invitation from my Lord.

Now, here is what I find even more humorous. When I opened the invitation it read like this:

"My dearest son, David,

I want you to know the reality of my love for you in a much deeper way. I am desperately desiring to radically change your walk in Me. It's time for much greater intimacy. I want you to walk with me amongst the fiery coals of my presence and holiness. A bi-product of this is that I will flow through you in greater power and Love to those around you. I want others to be touched by Me through you. Would you like to do this with me?"

"Wooo-Ho!!!!!!! Awesome, Father. Amazing! Thank you. Let's do this."

Hmmmmmm. Really...?

We live in the generation where words such as pruning, grooming, disciplining, refining, purging, judgment, chastisement, or holiness (to name a few) are stricken from the pulpit. I will take this reality a step forward and expose the true condition of our lopsided dogmas to say that those who dare to speak of the heart of God in regard to these areas of His nature are labeled as "fear mongering." This is simply a result of an exchange rate we have come to favor in the world economy of the Church.

We prefer convenience to communion.

Rules in exchange for relationship. Not surprisingly, two extremes result due to this American apathy toward seeking the heart of our Father.

- **We avoid standing apart from the world because we live in fear.**
- **We attempt to stand out... but with no authority behind it... because we live in fear.**

Properly exercising authority comes as a result of knowing who our Lord is, and then who we are as His child. Authority comes as a result of intimacy. The closer we draw to our Dad's heart the more we understand who we are and Who lives inside us. This distills down to knowing He loves you.

Here is the real urgency with this illness in the American Church for this hour: *the time is upon us where those who do not know how to exercise His Kingdom authority and His will on the earth will be in great danger of falling away.*

The Scriptures are warning us of this. The greatest manifestation of His authority is Love. If we are not connected intimately with His love in us, for us and through us... *our love will grow cold.*

Now, here is the crux.

Light exposes darkness. When we commune, it will expose the areas we are not living in agreement to His nature and His nature expressed through His Word. His presence exposes our fears, lies, insecurities and demonic pacts we have made (agreement with the world is a demonic pact). See Romans 8:7, 2 Corinthians 10:5, Galatians 6:8, 2 Corinthians 4:4 as a warm up exercise.

What will we do when that moment comes?

“Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets. As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

“...When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, 'How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around half naked in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!'

“David said to Michal, 'It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord people Israel - I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.'”2 Samuel 6

David did not need to build up courage to toss aside his royal garments and while he was half naked, dance in joy, love and humility before the Lord. He couldn't care less. David had, by this time, already learned who he was as a child of the Living God. He learned this in the lonely pastures while guarding his sheep... alone.

Raising a knife high above a tied up son, lions' dens, fiery furnaces, wet fleeces, bears, snowy pits... The lives we live publicly can be traced back to the invitation we accepted (or rejected) privately from the Lord to enter into deeper communion with Him. Said another way, the life we live publicly will reveal the life we live *In Him* privately. I am not referring to how we "behave." That is what Christian masks are for. A great many church fellowships sell them at the pulpit, retail stores, and book-stands at the back of the building next to the tithe and offering plates. They even come with detailed instructions. These masks have no Kingdom power. No, I am referring to the degree of Kingdom life that emanates through us without any thought or intention, will be directly related to the depth of our communion in Him.

These invitations are often not recognized because we do not see past the trial. Said another way, we will not recognize the invitations, much less accept them, if our hearts are not properly aligned with Him during the difficulties we are walking through.

Please remember this: the revelation of His love and His nature is revealed in the secret places within your trials,

disciplines and experiences. They are done most often (though not always) in solitude and seclusion.

What is secretly reaped during those lonely times of sowing are eventually revealed in public. Do you know of someone who openly displays the nature of Christ? Find out what his/her secret story is. I assure you, that person has many personal accounts to tell of interactions with his/her King.

NOTE: *The mind of Christ cannot be offended and knows no fear.*

Please hear me. This is not about us. It's about Him...if we simply surrender and are willing to die. This can be gained or lost at any time. We must learn to live in Him every moment. His invitations are constantly being sent out to the darkest, most timid areas of our bruised and broken hearts. Fear manifests in His children in many, many different ways. Timidity, boldness, apathy, constant movement, despair, self-reliance, insecurity, relationship dynamics... it's endless. The root is the same however. We are either doing what we do as an outflow of His life expressed in us, or we are living that area of our heart apart from Him.

“He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him.” Psalm 40:2-3

Our Dad is extending invitations in this season that require us to stare down that fear until it gives way to the revelation of Jesus Christ revealed more deeply in our heart. Don't focus on how you are performing. This leads to dead religion and worse still, a relationship based on trying to *earn something* that we already have; namely His love and acceptance.

Instead, look to Him. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Pull back the grave clothes from around our soul and let Him begin to write His words on the heart of His redeemed. His words, revealed through revelation of Him, bring forth eternal life within us in greater and greater measure if we just go to Him.

Ask Him to send you an invitation. He will keep sending them.

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

What will *we* do when that moment comes?

"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'" John 6:68

Shalom.

SECTION 4

Walking it Out

Introduction

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” 1 Corinthians 1:17

*“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”
1 Corinthians 4:20*

Sitting at a wedding table with several pastors and leaders from a local church, I found myself engaged in a light disagreement on how church gathering is meant to be governed, and what constitutes true corporate fellowship. My scriptural stance was simple enough. If we are not all functioning in the Body, the Body is not functioning. One man in particular, took strong exception with my views.

I sat patiently as I was questioned using dozens of scriptures, as these men attempted to disprove my convictions. As the conversation progressed I found myself vacillating between anger and tears as I realized that religion, theology and “form” were more important to these leaders, it seemed, than living the Gospel. Man seeks to control. Our Savior came to seek and save the lost. Amidst the loud music and the theological viewpoints being shot across the bow of my own beliefs, my heart silently broke until I quietly pushed back my chair and rose.

“Brother. There are people at this wedding, who are sick. There are people here who are hungry for Truth. There are people who need deliverance. “

You see just before my wife and I sat down at that table, we prayed over a young married couple and then another person who was heavily bound by depression.... all strangers to us (or were they really all our "neighbors"?)

Now, while he was talking, the Holy Spirit pointed someone out to me that needed healing released into their body. So I thanked him for taking the time to share with me his doctrines, and explained I was just not very interested in church government theological arguments over doing my Father's business.

"Forgive me. I need to go pray for someone."

At that, I put a gentle hand on his shoulder, smiled as softly as I could, and told Him I'd return.

It is one thing to read and discuss the things of the Kingdom; it is another to see them lived and in operation. One of the things we cannot do with theology alone is to give the Love of the Father to those around us. Our beliefs must be exercised or they are of little Kingdom use and certainly of no benefit to those who need our Dad's touch.

This Section is taken from my blog posts where I share some of the interactions I enjoy with the Lord and the world we live in. At some point, we must all begin to stand on our beliefs. This not only strengthens them, but stretches them and causes them to take deeper root. Above all though, as vessels created for good works, it is the natural byproduct of our communion with our Lord. Expression is communion put into practice. It is never a means to communion, but rather an outflow.

In these few chapters I am quite candid with my thoughts and feelings. Some of them are results of the depth of my communion that I have allowed Him to develop in me thus far, and some the result of the work still yet to be finished. Either way though, I hope it blesses you and offers some small windows into how we, as His Redeemed, may give what is inside of us to those who so desperately need it.

“...and my speech and my message were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” 1 Corinthians 2:4

I am so far from perfect it is humorous. I am not anyone's standard. As one who has some things to share, though, I do strive to serve the Body of Christ to my fullest. My function is to point the way for those who would seek more of Jesus. We must all point to Him. Jesus Christ alone is our perfect example. At times we may do this by reflecting His nature for others to learn. At times others learn through seeing the transparency and frailty of someone who the Lord is still working on.

This section is about sharing real life encounters. It is about seeing Christ within us moving on behalf of others... despite our shortcomings. All we need to do is be willing to yield to His heart. Walking in our true identity makes this more than possible. It is our destiny. It also is fun... even in the midst of such great pain.

So, having said that...

Laugh. Cry. Enjoy.

Chapter 1

What Do We Really Believe?

Quoting scripture is easy. Stating "Amen" is not too difficult either. Look, I'll do both now:

"For as a man thinks in his heart, so he is." Proverbs 23:7

"Amen!"

But, it is **how we think** that determines what we truly *believe* about ourselves and about our Father.

Do we really believe we are complete? Do we truly know that nothing we do or don't do makes any difference to our worth and value in His eyes?

Do we really?

It is work to examine our thoughts and make them obedient to the Word of God. I must admit at times, I'd

rather be piping (to you non-pipers out there, that means playing the bagpipes), until I don't play them so well...then my true beliefs are thrust upon me, but only because playing the pipes well is important to me. (Now the question would be for me to ask myself "why?")

The first recorded question Jesus asked man was in the garden.

"Where are you?" He called out.

Since that day, He has never stopped asking that question to His beloved. That beloved is you. Lately, He has been asking me this question a lot, and because He already knows the answer, what is important is to realize He queries us for the sake of our friendship.

It takes some serious grit to decide to reject a lifetime of mental ascent and ask the Lord to give us the courage to agree with all of His Word. It is not popular. It is not well received by much of the "Christian community." It makes others feel uncomfortable when one does not play by the rules of religion. Religion makes us feel self-satisfied and self-righteous. True relationship with our Dad upsets this caste system... a lot.

A "religious" mindset makes us bold, because it is rooted squarely in the crop planted by the carnal mind. Tying our worth to our perfection makes us audacious, if we succeed in it. I was the best at it... no kidding.

In the pages to come, I'll be sharing with you some time I am spending with the Lord, and a little bit from where He has taken me and where He is leading me. Let's be transparent here. Sometimes we want the bottom line, so the Cliffs Notes for the following journal entries you are about to view here read:

"He enjoys you. He adores your time spent with Him. He is bursting for you to open the door and have a bite to eat with Him."

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3

This is about walking it out with Him...in Him.

David

Chapter 2

Carousels and Food Courts

I don't much care for crowds. They have too many people in them.

Seriously, I find it hard to navigate my way through the masses of pain and hurt. Their longing, wandering, lost souls are beacons of wounds shining out from within them. I can hear their hearts crying out in many different ways, but every heart, in the end, beckons to have answered one question:

"Am I worth being loved?"

It's a sea of differing pangs and groans that all blend into a singular and rather loud cacophony of aches and moans. I'll near one person and hear their heart weeping, then it gets quieter and more distant as I pass on and begin to pick up the sounds of whoever I am walking closer to. What can I say...? It's a gift.

I don't much like crowds.

This is why I asked the Holy Spirit to hide me away in my own little world so that I could spend some “daddy date” time with my almost 5 year old, Daniel. He did. It was wonderful. Lost in the love for my son, and the love God ministers to me through him, every person at the Danbury Mall was a dull droning sound that was easily drowned out by the simple, sweet music of the carousel we roared together just outside the food court.

Some things never change though, such as circular-induced nausea, and I found myself forcing a sweaty, strained smile in response to Daniel gleefully announcing that he needed to use the restroom, as this machine-that-never-should-have-been-created ground to a halt.

It was then that I saw a young couple, with their infant, speaking in hushed words around a small food court table. Neither could have been more than twenty-four years old. She spoke low and slowly and I could tell by her demeanor she was very upset about something as she leaned in to address her partner. Sorrow and restrained anger were etched on her face... but above all, pain. They were some twenty feet away and other occupied tables were between us, so I did not hear what her words were.

However, I heard her heart... and his. The young man spoke not a word to her, his eyes silent and sullen. His spirit was broken. Hers was too, but in a different way. Instantly I knew their story and all that kept them together was a broken-hearted love for each other and great fear of the unknown.

I turned away and gently massaged my Daniel's soft hand as we walked on. The Lord didn't say a word to me. He asked me nothing and I asked Him nothing. No words were exchanged and I was quite content to wipe my eyes and move on.

I had completely forgotten about them and upon exiting the restroom with Daniel, once again holding my hand, I saw them in the same position. She leaning over him, and he silently looking up at her while she spoke. The baby was all quiet.

I peered down at my son who was looking all around, his face the picture of joyful, quiet contentment. I watched his gaze and saw the peace and wonder on his countenance. His eyes moved about the large food area from one scene to another. He was home. He knew how loved he was and the world was a magical beautiful playground to him. My sweet, strong, gentle warrior. This gift God gave me that I never thought I would be granted. He was in perfect peace.

They were not. Again, I noticed the Lord spoke nothing to me, and there was not a thought in my head that I cared to speak to Father about in that moment. In that moment, I thought only of them.

"Hello."

She immediately turned to me and very sweetly asked if we need the table. I shook my head, not sure if I would be able to talk. I looked at the young man who was still

seated, and he gazed up at me with eyes that bore witness to too many things already...

"I remember what it was like to have a single baby. Now I have three. I can see it is strong love that keeps you three together. Would you be offended if I prayed for you and your baby?"

The man said nothing, and I knew he wouldn't. He couldn't. I knew that already. But she did. "If you really want to, you can." she said, tears already welling up in her eyes.

Daniel said nothing, just looked at them, in perfect peace and innocence, as I stooped down a bit to announce we were going to pray. It was a quiet, simple prayer, and I had to stop a moment to finish my words as I felt His love flowing through me toward them. I blessed them. I blessed their child. I proclaimed they would know His love and peace and that Jesus died for them. I claimed protection over their baby now and always. I prayed for their love to grow in truth. Finally, I thanked God for these two beautiful people.

I looked back up at each of them and told them how much God loved them. Tears were rolling down her cheeks and I placed my hand just above the man's shoulder for the briefest of moments. Then I smiled, turned, and walked back toward the carousel.

Daniel was already looking around again, eyes going to and fro about the court. He didn't even stop his visual

meandering as he asked me in the most casual manner, "Daddy, why did we pray for them?"

My throat closed and my eyes blurred at his words, "Why did *we* pray...?"

In all that I have seen and heard and felt and grieved and loved so far, I'd have never thought I would so soon see my son know the heart of God so purely. Already I can sense he understands some things more clearly than the one who stewards his own heart.

"They needed God's love, Daniel," was all I said. "Yeah..." he said, looking intently at some aspect of that horrid contraption, the carousel. "I know, Dad."

The love we possess is the only love we can share with others. I am far from a specimen of love. But He has done so much in me as I have responded to His calling on my heart. There is soooo much left to do in me, but in the words of my estranged brother, Rich Mullins, "...so much He'd already done."

"Come away with me, David." I hear Him say again and again and again. It is in these quiet, often lonely places that we touch His heart, and He touches ours. This is where we are changed. This is the inner courts of His presence. It's beyond soul, beyond mental ascent, beyond apologetics and doctrines and pre-, mid- and post tribulation theological debates.

It is Him. It melts the ice that so quickly can grow in my heart, and is the salve on my eyes. He is my Balm of Gilead. One day I shall learn to abide there always. Until that time, I'll keep answering the call to come away with Him. If I have found favor with you, pray He touches my heart more.

I need so much more... The Lord has so much to give... it comes through His presence. It comes through His church, His beloved.

It comes through you... Shalom.

Chapter 3

Rise of the Warrior Poets

Staring at the cough medicine my 5 year old, Nathan, was loath to take, I offered to make it easier on him by giving him a cup of juice as a kicker.

He stared at the cup of juice and then turned back to look up at me. "Dad, can I do bravery?"

"You don't want the juice?"

"No, not until after the medicine. I want to do bravery," was his reply.

"Why do you want to 'do bravery' Nathan?" I was probing now to locate my son's heart.

"Because that is who God made me. I am a warrior."

"How do you know that, Nathan?"

"Because you told me, Dad."

In similar fashion, we believe what our Heavenly Father tells us... or we don't.

Jesus was given a cup by His Father, and now that I look back at it, Jesus' dialogue in the garden was not all too different. Jesus wanted to "do bravery" as well. Love for us compelled Him to drink that cup. And knowing how loved we are compels us to drink what Jesus hands us.

That cup comes in many forms... one of them is the cup of Truth, the cup of His Word. No one can drink it for you.

I have a tough time getting away to cry alone these days. It's not that I cannot run off somewhere when I need to just get quiet with the Lord. Rather, it's that lately it seems no matter where I go, The Lord is wanting to get me to see His children, my family, the way He sees them.

Last week I attempted to escape to the gym. Pushing weight has always been an activity that has helped focus my mind and talk with God about whatever is on my heart. This day though I wanted nothing but to be left alone. I pulled my hat down as far as I could without tripping over the machines around me and was approaching my weights when the Lord asked me something.

"David, what do you see?"

I often hide pain behind humor. I am actually pretty good at it - making light of something that is in reality deeply troubling to me, but since I am an open book, it's also quite

a bit of fun, because I know I am not fooling anyone... which makes it all the more amusing to myself... and I am pretty big on amusing myself.

"I don't see anything, Lord... my hat is down." I actually laughed aloud at this, partly because of the notion of my response, and partly because I was preparing myself for an all too familiar encounter that I knew would stir up passion.

"Look around the room."

"Lord, I want to grow up. I don't want you to have to catch me off guard to impart your heart on a matter, so let me please just settle my spirit and then I will look around. I want to see what you see before you have to tell me, OK?"

I took a moment; it wasn't long. I could feel a pull on my heart and already tears were welling up. Love and power. Power and tenderness. Tenderness and fierceness. Fierceness and love...

This kept cycling over and over and over in my heart. With eyes closed I could feel this cycle of strength. The strength of lions and the tenderness of those lions protecting their cubs... while slaughtering to feed.

Opening my eyes and pushing back my baseball cap, I looked around... and I saw them.

My eyes were drawn to each man in the weight room. There was only one problem. What I saw did not match

what I perceived moments ago with my eyes shut. I saw men that were big, tough... and scared. Trapped animals. Trapped inside the false belief system of this world. The god of this world has done a magnificent job of weaving the lie that a "true man" is a man who tries not to cry at funerals, is slightly rough with his sons, and amongst other things, exerts himself as an Alpha in his surroundings. This is a real warrior.

Or is it?

"David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword." 1 Samuel 17:51

"David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep." 1 Samuel 30:4

I spoke no words to my Savior. I just stood there, getting more and more choked up at the brokenness I saw in my lost brothers.

"Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the wilderness. They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. Their faces were the faces of lions, and they were as swift as gazelles in the mountains."

1 Chronicles 12:8

"These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the

Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter." Samuel 23:8

"(David and his men)... mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword." 2 Samuel 1:12

"The time has come for this generation to be set free, David."

It was at that instant I saw what He was saying. I suddenly saw a room filled with men that knew what it meant to be loved by their Father, redeemed by their Savior, and experiencing the power of the Kingdom through a revelation of the reality of the Holy Spirit living powerfully inside them. These men were not afraid to tear down the kingdom of the enemy, or show tenderness. These men were licking their chops to set others free of sickness in Jesus' name, and were quite comfortable expressing their feelings. These were men that relished the opportunity to stand up and shout in a mall, airport or packed out street corner to the world that theirs is One God and One Mediator. Thumping their shields with the sword of the Word they proclaim to all around them, "Jesus is Lord!!!"

"In still another battle, which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot- twenty-four in all. He also was descended from Rapha. When he taunted Israel,

Jonathan son of Shimeah, David's brother, killed him." 2 Samuel 21:20

"In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod." 2 Samuel 21:19

"Eleazar, son of Dodai the Ahohite... he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead."

2 Samuel 23:10

These men cry.

"When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep." 1 Samuel 30:3

"But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot." 2 Samuel 15:30 "I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears." Psalm 6:6

I slowly backed myself into the nearest shadow, behind a machine, letting my tears run freely as I saw the beauty of

my Father's sons. These broken, lost, fractured men are called to be kings and rulers under the headship of the King of kings. I felt many of their hearts... locked up treasures. Deep hidden treasures of immense value to our Dad. Who will dare to speak to them about such things?

The Lord is also setting the table for deep, intimate fellowship with men whose hearts already know and love Him deeply... but don't yet walk in the revelation and understanding in heart that one cannot be "more" of a man.

These are the forerunners who are called to dare to go forth and teach others what true identity is in Christ.

I believe this generation of men is being called out of the world's pride of life. No more lies. No more self deception. We shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free, and who the Son sets free shall be free indeed. (John 8:32,36)

We are His creation. Created in His image, we are complete in Him. We cannot become less or more than what He already says we are. We are complete. The most frail, unathletic, pocket-saver, pencil toting guy cannot and never will be less a man than the one who looks like a deposed Greek god, hurled down from Mt. Hermon

His sons and daughters can do nothing to add to their masculinity or femininity. There is no place for this in the Word of God. There is no place for this in our thinking if we are to walk in the mind of Christ.

This is not a Bible study... or a scriptural text sermon.
This was a brief and intense time of fellowship I had with our Savior that I knew I wanted to share.

Men... begin to seek out what your Heavenly Dad says about you. How do we do this? Simple. Read what the Living Word says. It's pretty good. Then decide you will accept that over your contradicting upbringing and thoughts. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

"Warrior poets." I whispered to myself as I hid from view.
"These are warrior poets."

In whatever area of a man's life we do not turn to God and His Kingdom truth, we turn to believe a lie in its place. There is no gray. The more we walk in the liberty of knowing our value and worth in the eyes of our Creator, the more we are free to simply "be." We then begin to enter into the joy of expression without shame, embarrassment, or the just plain weirdness that so many believers exhibit because we are trying to wear some self-imposed Christian mask. It's a dark, bondage filled, fearful place to live out of... and rather boring in my humble opinion.

Legalism has at its root the same belief as spiritual excessiveness. The root is an ignorance to the reality that we are the righteousness of Christ. This was a gift given us at salvation. It is ours. It is yours.

Dare to walk in it. Dare to rest in it. Dare to be who you were already transformed into the moment you accepted the Kingdom inside you.

"Jesus wept." John 11:35

(NOTE: although this particular interaction was focused around "men" - this reality, calling and destiny is intended for all His children, including His warrioresses.)

Chapter 4

What Trouble Are Giants?

It was the largest, most intimidating demonic entity I had ever seen up to this point in my walk with God. It stood well over 9' and I would have put it, in human terms, as weighing around 500 lbs or so. It was dressed as a warrior, covered in armor, and grasping a sword that was almost as tall as me. His arms were much larger than my thighs and the veins that bulged out on his biceps were thicker than my index finger. I discerned instantly in my spirit that even if one blocked his swing with a shield, the force of that blow would shatter an arm. His skin was covered in a green, moss-like substance; a decay of sorts that I didn't quite understand.

Let me back up...

I normally do not share these types of dreams/visions that the Lord sometimes walks me through, for several reasons.

For one thing, all of us have our own walk with God, and within the Body of Christ it runs the full spectrum from being completely intellectual in practice, to very, very... odd. Without the benefit of being face to face with a person, there is no dialogue; no "what do you mean by that, exactly?" and "where does that fit in doctrinally with the Word?"

So at the risk of sounding like one of "those Christians" let me say this: The written word of God is our final authority on ALL things. No "experience" is placed above God's written Word, and all things must be consistent and submitted to the contextual agreement with the doctrines of God's nature as is expressed within His written Word. So, having stated that, I am one of those people who agree with God's Word that says He will speak to us and that He longs to commune intimately with His children.

Sometimes He may speak to His children in dreams, by the inner witness, an impression, thoughts within our spirit, sometimes by visions the scriptures say... but always through the written Word.

Our self-worth is established by the accomplished work on the cross. Alone. It is not based on the kind or depth of relationship we have with our Lord. If we seek experiences, we will fall into deception.

If we seek Him, however, knowing and resting in the scriptural truth that we are complete in Him and His love for us is immeasurable... well, the bi-product is communion and communication.

We seek Him. We seek His presence. We are not to seek “experiences.” Show me someone who is seeking experiences and I will show you a child of God who is trying to earn love and value, not knowing both are already forever established as His holy, blameless, sanctified and righteous child. The blood of Christ accomplished and freely gave us this. So, having tried my best here within time constraints to lay a biblical supported foundation, if you don’t subscribe to dreams/visions in which the Lord speaks to His children, it’s alright (perhaps the principle of what I share will bear witness with your spirit). But... chances are pretty good that someone who does, has performed this kind of intercession on your behalf, or for your family and loved ones. Just saying...

So, back to me and my new “best friend”...

His eyes burned with a rage I never saw before - a rage that I am convinced humans are not capable of possessing. In the midst of this rage, however, I saw this spirit was in complete control of himself and intently focused on his goal. His goal was singular: to absolutely and utterly destroy a child of God, and all that child stood for in the Kingdom. He was there to make a spectacle of God’s Kingdom and thoroughly obliterate a son of The Most High.

Now, normally, when the Lord shows me these things in my prayer time, I am thrilled at the opportunity to do some slaughter. The kind of slaughter and carnage against the enemy camp that is capable only through the name of

Jesus and the authority of His name. I love it. I mean it. I-LOVE-IT. The bigger they come the harder they fall, and I relish "natural odds" being defied. Praise God!! It brings such glory to His name.

Other than the fact this was the largest fallen creature I had ever seen before, there was one other significant factor that I allowed to influence my thinking at the time of this encounter. He was staring directly at me.

I was his assignment. Now, many of you might be thinking. "Cool, David. Awesome. You charged right at him, right?"

Um... no. No, I didn't. Abject horror swept over every part of my being. My soul felt as if it was curdling in the presence of this pure, putrid evil and in my head I wanted to say goodbye to my loved ones before I died. I was surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses and in my spirit I knew that every person I had ever met was there being permitted to watch this encounter. I also knew there were many, many others there I had not met yet, but would one day.

This demon called forth every curse imaginable and proclaimed in front of the whole assembly who were seated in this sort of Amphitheatre... a coliseum of sorts... that "this David" would fall by his sword this day. His work was over. He would never rise again. Those in his life would be scattered and the toil that was performed on behalf of Father's Kingdom would be thrown to the wind. Tears filled my eyes as he turned back to me.

And then God spoke to my spirit. "Your time is not yet up, David. And when it is, it will not come by the hand of those whom I have placed under your feet. Many years ago you asked Me for another chance to not compromise in battle. That time is now. Not by power, not by might, but by Me."

It was like seeing a sunrise. You can almost watch the moment, but then again - did you really see it change positions? The light of His truth began to dawn within my heart, and the Holy Spirit began confirming His Word. I am His. I am righteous. I am the redeemed. I am complete. I am holy. I am His son.

I am loved.... I...AM...LOVED...!

All fear vanished as a vapor. My mind was clear and calm. My whole body began to quake. Tears flowed down my cheeks, blurring my vision. All I could see in the eyes of my heart was Jesus. It wasn't tears of rage. It was not anger. I was crying at how much He loves me.

Raising my head, and turning squarely to face this fallen giant, I drew my sword...

So how did it end? Well...I am here, right? I have not gotten diagnosed with a disease and I didn't suddenly die in some freak car accident. Nor has my heart been pierced to the point of death through some tragic event that might ruin me. Nor will any of these, or any other "assignment" come to pass. Ever...

Two things occurred in that "dream." One: That demonic assignment was very quickly left without an arm and more importantly... a head. Two: I came away with a greater revelation of His love for me... and who lives IN me. Did my authority increase? No. *My awareness of He who lives inside me increased.* The authority was there all along. Knowledge of His love for us increases the use of the authority of His name. This removes fear.

As the Body of Christ seeks to meditate and agree and accept Who really loves us, and how HE sees us... all fear dissolves into oblivion.

More than ever, this world needs the love of God revealed to it. But how can we give it if we don't actually understand ourselves, WHO dwells mightily inside us?

That will never do....

We have all the power and dominion over the enemy. This means we have the power and dominion to set the captives free. First things first. Get to know Him better. Choose to accept what His Word says about how lovely He sees His children. We are accepted in the Beloved. We are beautiful in His sight. We have all dominion. We are given an open invitation to enter into the Holy of Holies. Jesus took the keys to all forms of death, including fear, anxiety, rejection, torment and shame. Forever.

We have the ability to bring the Kingdom everywhere we go because it resides inside the reconciled child of God. He

gave us eternal life. That eternal life is already inside us...
not sure exactly what that means?

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

John 10:10

Dare to find out.

Chapter 5

To Build a Fire...

Exhortation. Encouragement. Motivation.

I have seen these gifts in operation. I have seen what they can do... Let me back up. I detest writing.

Writing for me is to intimately feel and express pain, and joy and fire and love. Who can contain such things? Fire is great for many purposes, but does that mean one wants to hold it? Perhaps... far enough away... on a stick, where it may be viewed and discussed and pondered without ever having to feel it. And so it often is with things that deal with our Dad's heart.

Having said all that, I shall write a couple of things I have seen and felt.

I have seen first-hand how a mob can be rallied to storm the homes of the innocent. I have watched in sands of time past how a nation will hearken unto the cry of a lone voice and step foot on foreign soil in the name of "...." I have seen babies taken from mother's arms, and parents torn

from their childrens' desperate clinging grip; the nail scrapes around the back of the father's neck, evidence that the incident did not go without contention. Some of the most atrocious acts of man, Scripture tells us, is yet to come. They will continue to be done under the "guiding leadership" of motivation and exhortation by those who would lead us. I have also seen what happens when His Bride is motivated to crusades and bigger gatherings, and programs and... things.

I have seen... All under the banner of motivation, exhortation and comfort.

Any gift(s) used outside the heart, mind and will of the Father is a gift perverted. It is fine to rally to something... only if that rally is birthed from the Kingdom of God. This is of course true, only if viewed from the spiritual mindset that we are seeking the Kingdom of God and not anything else.

"Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God." Joel 2:13

"No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God." Romans 2:29

I can do nothing but listen when my Redeemer is speaking. Here are some things He is asking His Bride. Who is motivating His Church? What is His Church being motivated toward?

And so, I must ask us to consider: what we do or do not do, when we gather "in His name." We are gathering, perhaps... but are we gathered to seek Him? If we are, how much of it is compromised because we are being exhorted, motivated or encouraged not to simply seek Him, but to seek an emotional feeling, or anything else?

Every one of these questions cited below will elicit a response. That response either comes from the heart and mind of Christ alone - or from the traditions of man and carnal minded thinking.

- What do "light shows" in fellowship have to do with Christ? What does a drummer and three guitarists have to do with worship?
- Why does a worship team face us and we face them? Why is there a screen so we can look at the person "leading" worship?
- Why is there emotionally stirring music played when a spiritual commitment is supposedly asked for during an "altar call?"
- Why do we use titles?
- Why do we refer to only some as anointed when the Word says all NT believers have an anointing?
- Why do we invite non-believers into the holiness of a Believer's Fellowship - and yet hold water baptisms, which is the sign of our public

profession, *inside* a building, and not on a public lake or beach or park?

“I have the right to do anything,’ you say, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything,’ but not everything is constructive.” 1 Corinthians 10:23

Who, or what, began motivating us to do these things? From whence did they come? What changed? Why are we doing the things we are doing? We are a spirit, we possess a soul, and we live in a temple of flesh. But what is governing our walk... or compromising it? Is the Holy Spirit sharing His throne with our soulish desires?

The Word says to judge actions and not each other. But what I am sharing here is actually not an act of either.

They are questions our Lord is asking us. Who will answer them in the deepest part of their inner being? Who will enter into the Holy of Holies that churns inside us and discuss these things with Him face to Face? Who will spend time with the One who died for us and dare to hash out the issues that are on His heart?

Please hear the heart of our Father here.

It is not where we gather... it is what we are gathering *toward*. What is our "fellowship" motivating us toward? How long ago did we commit to Christ? How many of us... all these years later, know their giftings and function in them daily? When was the last time we held someone who tearfully committed their life to Christ? When did we last pray for a stranger we just met in a supermarket, gym, or

gas station? The Bible explains in great detail that we are all to walk in the vast ways the Holy Spirit desires. All of us. The Word gives great detail into how corporate gathering will evolve as we seek Christ alone. The Word also tells us how they will desolve once we begin to drift from seeking Him alone. How long have you been in church fellowship and how many times have you used your giftings?

Brothers and sisters, there is something out of sync with the Church body in America in regard to the heart of our Dad.

"Well, David. You are just causing division. You are in rebellion. You are looking to divide." Let's examine that religious statement against the Word of God.

"For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household." Matthew 10:34

"Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." Luke 12:51

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:5

The Word of God divides. Truth divides. He divides that which is worldly from that which is of His heart, mind and Kingdom. Speaking a challenging word does not divide

people... it divides and exposes the motive, and the motivations of men in light of the Gospel.

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

We are called to rightly divide. The Word of God is an all consuming Fire. Fire is Love. The Word of God will always divide. It will always do this. Always.

He loves you. His joy is beyond measure at the thought of His Church gathering in order to glorify and seek Him and Him alone. Without compromise. It is the ultimate expression of His gift of free will given back to Him. He is Communion. Communion is Love personified. If this discussion prompts one to feel shame, anger, or the need to defend a person or cause, it reveals we are not walking in the Mind of Christ and do not understand who we are as a child of God to the depth we are meant to walk in. This is not about pastors, or elders or home fellowships, or church buildings, or how uncomfortable it can be to sit on my old couch during prayer when we gather. This is not about anything or anyone else who will not be standing with you when you appear before your Judge one day and He asks with tearful eyes,

“David. Did you seek to know Me, and Me alone? I have waited a long time. Let us begin... finally... now.”

Dare to challenge the status quo of our traditions and manner of corporate "fellowship." I assure you. The colors

of any light show cannot compare to the colors of His eyes staring into yours. The beat of high-end, amplified worship music cannot in any way compare to the love that beats within the spirit and soul of a child of God who has had intimate encounters with our Lord. This is our calling. This is our destiny. He is calling His Church to Himself. Who will answer the call of His heart? There is no condemnation in His calling. There is only Fire in it. Let Him build that Fire within you. Allow Him to make it all consuming...so that nothing else matters. Not what is popular or comfortable or easy or convenient. Or lukewarm. Only Fire. The fire of His heart beating to have all of yours...beating one with yours.

I love writing.

What a dreadfully wonderful way to express His pain and joy and fire and love. Who can contain such things? Fire is great for many purposes. Most of all it divides.

So that we may all be one in Him.

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.” Psalm 73:25

We say this. We all say this....

Humbly... and imperfectly,

David

Chapter 6

Counting the Cost

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters - yes, even their own life - such a person cannot be my disciple." Luke

14:26

How often is this verse twisted or simply ignored for lack of understanding? Let me help share the Lord's heart here a bit. The Greek word for "hate" here means simply *"to love less; to esteem more lightly than."* Jesus is not contradicting His nature and He is not stating He will reject us. Our Lord is letting us know that if we do not count the cost and have Him as our first Love, we are not capable of reflecting the fullness of His nature and image to those around us who need to see that image.

Now the verse becomes so simple, right? Our walk with our Dad is meant to be so simple. So deep. It is why we were created.

But with all things, there is a cost. I'll share a piece of my past...

Pulling my truck out of the parking lot of a local supermarket, my wife and I spotted a lone elderly lady, perhaps 70 years of age, meandering amongst the parked cars. Her walk was slow and something about her compelled me to pull over.

"Ma'am, can we help you in any way?"

She explained she was selling "maps" of the historic town where we live. My mother-in-law had in fact, just given me such a map and as I gazed at this lady's print I saw it was a cheap, xeroxed version of the one we had hanging on our fridge at home. I peered into her intently as she explained they were \$5 each, and a glossy version sold for \$10.

She turned and looked up at me through my rolled down window... and in that moment I knew a great part of me wished I had never stopped.

The hearts of people are like rivers - violent currents of tumultuous waters that flow downstream toward an unknown and unseen waterfall. As I looked into her eyes, the river swept over me.

Fragile love and a fragile existence lived. Tenderness mingled with a joy for life and a spirit of hope was an integral part of her makeup. Such a gentle, warm soul and by the grace of God's gifts placed within her before the foundations of the world, she has held on to this life. It was not an easy one. And now she was alone, rejected and

overlooked. This is someone's mother. This was someone's wife.

This is Someone's daughter.

Choking back tears, and turning to Maija, I asked how much cash we had. My wife silently opened her wallet, and tipping it toward me, I saw \$40.

So I turned and gave the woman...twenty.

She sparkled, and hope filled her heart as the Lord revealed to me she was not expecting to have such a "good day." My eyes began to blur more as it dawned on me, I would most likely be the only one to buy these from her. I soon drove away and got no more than 60 feet or so, when I put the truck in park and wept deeply, my face buried in my hands and steering wheel. I felt the Lord's river of love for her as well as what her heart was feeling. To this day, I am not sure which was more painful to bear. Unable to move, see, or speak, I let those two rivers, both His and hers, flow over me. I had little choice and I yielded. I was there a long time...

Not once did it occur to me to give her all my money (how could I buy the sandwich at the deli I was heading toward?) Not once did it occur to me to invite her home for a meal (what would I do once the meal was over, and how long would she stay??) It did however, occur to me to share the Gospel with her but I did not. She might actually have thought I was crazy, and besides I was "living" the gospel just then, wasn't I? Surely that was enough.

That event took place over 5 years ago, and I can recall it as if it was last month and forever will. It comes to my remembrance every time I pull into that parking lot. It comes to mind on every cold day.

So what is my point in all of this? On the surface, my act could have been seen as such a deep expression of Father's love. Doubtless if I was in the company of "lost" bystanders or worse yet, Christians, I would have been admired and become the source of dinner conversation in someone's home...doubtless. Here is the reality. I fell short. Very short. The question is "of what?" and the answer is as simple as the verse we opened with. I fell short of His heart and His nature and His love expressed. I simply was not yet at that place in my walk with the Lord. I could only give what I possessed myself.

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it?" Luke 14:28

"Faith without works is dead." Sure, I felt His heart. I loved that stranger in an instant. Out of the overflow of my communion with my Father, I wanted to give her some of the unfathomable love of the Father. And I did to the extent I had counted the cost at that point in my walk. But there is more...always, so much more of Father to experience.

This is not about "works" as confusing as it may seem at the moment. This is about overflow. We can only give what we possess. We can only possess what we go get.

And we can only go get what we have apprehended from the Throne-room of God. In order to do this we must decide in our life and walk what we are going to "love less" and what we are going to "love more."

This is not about works. This is not about self-condemnation. This is about communion. This is about relationship. This is about walking with Him in the "*garden in the cool of the day...*" (Genesis 3:8)

A generation is coming forth in this hour who will desire communion with Him above all things. The call is going forth.

"Return to your First Love."

Are we willing to lay aside our pride, our amenities, our comforts and above all - the convenience of the way we conduct our born-again relationship - or dare I say, born-again "religion?"

Here is the most amazing thing about our Father. He loves us fully either way. We are His sons and daughters. There is a cost though. There is pain involved. Carrying the glory cloud of Dad's heart inside you is not something that comes with compromise... on any level. To the degree we lightly esteem the things that beg for our allegiance is the degree we walk amongst the stones at the foot of His throne. This is not apologetics. This is not about theology. This is not about visualization and allegories. This is about a spiritual relationship and reality, and I cannot imagine

any cost that is not worth paying to abide in Him. In Him is life. In Him is fullness of joy. In Him is...everything.

He is speaking to your hearts even now. Jesus is calling for His Bride to come to Him in true oneness, unity and true love. What does this even mean? Dare to find out. Dare to count the cost of seeking Him above all things and with all your heart. You cannot earn His love. It's already fully there. We just need to perceive it. This comes through spending time with Him. Father is a bear robbed of her cubs. He is raging for you.

He eagerly is waiting. His eyes scan the horizon of our hearts. He is waiting to lavish you with His love and transform you into the fullness of His nature. This is true relationship. And it is this kind of relationship expressed as an outflow that brings those lost children to the cross.

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Luke 15:20

When I falter in my zeal to know Him more fully...in the midnight watch when I hear Him call me to come away with Him...when I feel the weakness of the flesh creeping into my thoughts and when I find that dead, carnal minded man daring to contend with the mind of Christ that we have been given at salvation, I think on this woman, and so many others...

And this galvanizes my resolve. Yes. I will arise and go to Him.

It is the love of Christ that compels us, the Word says, and to the depths we rest in His expression over us, is the degree we allow Him to spring forth from within us. The more we experience His love, the more we love Him. The more we naturally want to give away that love, lest we die from that pain of love hindered and fellowship lost.

Set your forehead like flint. There is a spirit realm that is accessible to every born-again child of God. The Kingdom is within you. It is here that we are to live and move and have our being. It is here that is our Sabbath Rest and the fullness of our destiny. And it is from here...that we give to others the only thing that we can ever truly possess.

Count the cost. See what happens....

Chapter 7

Thunderstorms and Love

My breath is labored. The pit of my stomach a twisted knot. Straining to see the keyboard at work and straining to see His Love with the eyes of my heart. Brewing within my being is a very familiar anvil-shaped cloud rising higher and higher.

I am dying. Yet not me, only that which I have already died to is passing away. He is setting me free. In order to live fully in Him, I must die to that which is dead to Him. It is within these very still, quiet moments of our deepest agony that one feels most alone. I think on Calvary at these times. As the looming section of crossed boards were dropped in a clap of dust at Jesus' feet... I cannot help but feel comforted at knowing He dealt with immeasurably more than I.

I can feel my eyes scanning the souls of those around me when I am like this. "Do you see me?" My heart meekly whispers; barely enough energy to take a breath. I have learned by now though, that in the end, it is only my

Savior and I... and thus it must be. How often the message of "taking up our cross" has been perverted and misconveyed. We only die to one thing... that which is already dead. Who else needs know my angst? Some butchering is simply best performed on the backside of the shed.

Alone.

And so I have trained the windows of the soul to stop scanning the farthest reaches of the crowds when I feel myself standing at the gallows... my heart, I make be still. I don't allow it to call out. Deep isn't always meant to call to deep... and at times we are permitted only to call to Him.

"If you cannot trust Me when your house is in the balance, how will you trust me if My house is in the balance?"

This is what the Lord spoke to my spirit this morning as I asked Him for some Kingdom insight in regard to a pretty serious situation the Lord has orchestrated. I am, even now, in the middle of a rather unexpected trial that has the potential for both some intense and unpleasant results.

Pretty cool, huh?

This year is a year of testing, probing and refining within our Dad's house. We are being refined and purified. This is a season where the Lord, in His intense jealousy for us to experience what the cross has given us access to, namely His heart, is wicking way all aspects of the carnal-minded man from His children.

I knew refining was coming... and this is the toughest, most intense series of events I have yet to face in my walk with the Lord. This is good. This means I am going deeper if I allow it. This means the "lesser" trials have worked their purpose.

Surprised? Did some of you think *David Murry* would be exempt from this further refining? I can tell you this: if I was exempt - I would beg for His righteous judgments all the more. They are love. They are truth. They release the Kingdom power and set ablaze my spirit more and more with every single event. I enter deeper into Him.

This is the light Jesus speaks of. It is Him within us.

Our hearts must always be blowing the shofar within the deepest recesses of our being... "Maranatha, Lord!" Make your abode in us fully. Have every single piece of us... that we may be one with you. Fully. Without reservation. Without fear. Perfect peace and perfect rest in Him alone.

And so the darkened areas of my heart - those hidden caverns that I frequent from time to time - long to be submitted to the Kingdom light and truth. Even from these hideous, decrepit corners of my mind - from deep within these - I cry.... "Maranatha!"

None of His children can escape His love. It overtakes us with the ferocity of an oxygen starved backdraft. He is Fire. An all consuming one at that. That fire is love. I write this both as an opportunity to praise Him in the midst of

my enemy, and more importantly, to me, at least, to encourage all of you. You cannot outpace the wind. You can't outrun a thunderstorm. You simply cannot outrun His love for you.

Let that which is meant to die, die, and that which is meant to spring forth, spring forth. My breath is calm. My stomach no longer in spasms. My sight returns to me. I see only Him now.

My heart is steadfast, oh Lord... my heart is steadfast...

You can do this, Beloved Church. He has already prepared the way. He has already prepared you. He is with you always. Never turn back... you can do this. All you have to do...

...is die.

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not brought to life, unless it dies first." 1 Corinthians 15:36

Humbly, and by His love alone, I remain,

David

Chapter 8

Friends of Esau

I am staring out the window even as I type.

Out there, beyond the gray haze of morning glory that has given way to the pseudo-winter looking sky of this mild NY December, is the vast expanse of His children. A creation that can be traced all the way back.

Back to the beginning...

I am thinking about Esau these days. I think on him perhaps more than some. We grew up quoting scriptures such as "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated..." Context and content become a distant priority in light of twisting verses to guard our misguided beliefs and protect our fragile sense of broken identity.

How often does my thinking line up more with this seed of Abraham than the child of "promise?"

We are so quick to ridicule the one who forsook his birthright, but do we really take the time to note that it was a result of a brother who would not share a bowl of food to a starving sibling? What we fail to realize is that the nature of both sons was the same.

Sinful. Fallen. Darkened. Selfish.

We seek our own way. On the surface it may be in the form of despising our spiritual inheritance, despising what His Word declares about His child. Or it may be in the form of trying to manipulate our Father, thinking if we reject and resent ourselves enough in the name of "humility" we will cull His favor, His love.

Either way, we are searching for something we refuse to acknowledge Father has already given us. We already have all His heart. "When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, 'Bless me—me too, my father!'"

We too beg and plead, looking for Father to say He loves us. Looking for a confirmation. A blessing.

We get to choose how we will live. Will we exist in the bondage of a heart that stubbornly refuses to accept the goodness of His love? Will we contend with Him even as He is in the midst of us... *inside us?*

Consider this next time you enter into your worship with your Lord. Consider that all that love you pour out in tears

and pain and longing is actually *His heart... His pain... His tears...*

...at the thought His child is in reality begging for love...

and calling that "worship."

I look forward to meeting Esau one day. And I trust on that day we'll exchange embraces. I shall look him deep in the eyes. I know my own will say "I am sorry." Sorry it took me so long to learn from his own pain... his suffering... his broken longing.

He is after all a friend, is he not? Or even now, are our hearts still so hardened?

There can be no exchange of love... no true friendship, where there is no agreement. It is time to go back. Go back to the beginning. Back to a time when you first felt the love of the One who died for you. Back when the realization of that love is what compelled you to accept Him as your own.

We already have all His heart. How much of ours does He really have?

"I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."
Genesis 15:1

Chapter 9

Clouds and Fire

"Such as I have Lord, I give to this boy." It was a simple prayer.

Inside the diner, I gently placed my right hand on top of the head of this little 3 year old, who, ironically perhaps, was also named Nathan. His eyes were not set properly and when I asked the boy's grandmother if I could pray for him, she was thrilled.

"He is actually going for surgery tomorrow." She told me.

You don't say? What are the odds of that?

I disregarded that info, and spoke healing into his eyes, protection, and above all, that this tender little child would come to know His Savior personally. It was a simple prayer and when I opened my eyes, he was staring intently at me. Oh how I longed to scoop him into my arms and just hold him - to let the love of God wash all over him. But you see, they did not know me. I was a stranger on the road to Jericho. So I had to keep all that in. I had to

tame that passion. I had to remain... "normal." That's OK. We take what we can get, right?

Turning back to where my family was enjoying the remains of their meals, I was dimly aware that my children did not even think it odd that I was praying for a stranger... Perhaps amidst all the mistakes I am continuing to make, at least some aspect of His heart is printing on my two Sons of Thunder and my little Lamb.

Perhaps....

It was then that I saw another couple, sitting at a table behind us. Neither of them were much older than twenty, if that, and they were quietly laughing. I knew immediately they shared a deep love for each other... a camaraderie that went well beyond the superficial platitudes of self-centered "friendships." These two had each other's backs. The girl's hair was a dark blue, and his a matching shade as well - shaggy, with streaks of orange throughout. Their smiles were bright and countenance carefree.

But something was just itching at me. Not the agitation that I often get. Just.... something. I felt such love for them. I tried not to stare, but a passion for them rose up like a storm. The Fire Pillar within me that was fanned for the boy was now raging for this couple, and I could feel my eyes swelling. I was vaguely aware I had stopped walking.

"What is it, Lord? What's up?"

"I love them very much," the Lord responded, "and they don't know it."

That will never do. "Hey, guys. Sorry to interrupt, but I just wanted to say..."

I spoke with them for no more than two minutes. I asked about their hair and shared with them how I could tell they were sweet, gentle people. She was in school for hair, and had in fact, done the styling herself on both their heads. After a moment more, I thanked them for their time, and rejoined my family.

Several minutes later I turned to see them standing right beside me. After a silence that perhaps might make even a dead person uncomfortable, she spoke.

"I wish you were my dad," the young lady said... and for the first time in many, many years... I did not know what to say. I just... loved them both, so much... so... much.

So... I stood and asked them if they would be offended if I prayed over them. Collecting my composure, I blessed them with life, with hope, with joy and above all, that they would know how much the God who died to rescue them, also, in fact, loved them deeply. I gave them our number, and watched them walk out. I could spiritually see a deep, thick blanket of love placed upon them by the Lord. Almost like a cloud.

That's better...

I had forgotten about the event entirely, when I saw a text a few days later from the young lady. She confessed to having seriously considered ending her life that day, and added, "Meeting you made me realize there are good people in the world..."

More than ever, this world needs the love of God revealed to them. Who dwells mightily inside us is *Love personified*. But how can we give it if we don't actually understand it ourselves?

That will never do...

We have all the power and dominion over the enemy. This means we have the power and dominion to set the captives free. I heard it once said that there is "a freight train living on the inside of us," and He is raring to get out. Let us all find out who He is. He who lives mightily inside you loves you powerfully. Choose to accept what His Word says about how lovely He sees His children. We are accepted in the Beloved. We are beautiful in His sight. We have all dominion. We are given an open invitation to enter into the Holy of Holies. Jesus took the keys to all forms of death, including fear, anxiety, rejection, torment and shame. Forever. We have the ability to bring the Kingdom everywhere we go... because it resides inside the reconciled child of God. He gave us eternal life. That eternal life is already inside us... not sure exactly what that means? Consider casting aside the worries, pleasures and fallen thinking of this world.

You are fully loved already. Meditate on these truths. We are called to think as He thinks. We cannot do this if we meditate on our own self-condemnation. We are called to live holy (this means to express His nature inside us first... And then out.) How can we do this if we choose to live lives that say we do not believe He loves us unconditionally and deeply?

“But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” Colossians 1:22

The greater we press into the reality of His love, the greater we will be motivated from His love, and in His love, to live lives consistent with His nature. This is where the fire pillar grows. This is where the rage of His consuming nature begins to consume His child. The blast furnace is within you. Holy Spirit is not idle. He churns and invites and longs to confirm the words of the Father towards Himself, you and those around you.

“As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses.” Exodus 33:9

“By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.” Exodus 13:21

The Pillar is the Holy Spirit manifested. That Cloud and that Fire is now within every child of God.

That young boy and couple will never know, that by me being touched by Father's heart, I will love them always,... but it has been my fervent prayer that through that encounter, they will know that the heart of the only One that truly matters, loves them passionately.

Theology and doctrine and expositions have their proper place in both the corporate Body and our walk. But nothing... nothing.... replaces giving the love of God to others in all the varied forms that Holy Fire may wish to release it through His sons and daughters.

This is a process. We must allow him to work from the inside out. Performing "dead works" (actions originating from the outside, in an attempt to change our inside) to get God to love us more, is not only manipulative, it is also impossible. If we have personally accepted Christ as our Savior with all our heart, then we are already fully pleasing and loved and adored. Father God longs for this intimacy, and the lost need us to be capable of carrying it and releasing it. It is all found with time spent "In Him."

Oh, and by the way... **the more we spend time with Him, the more we will begin to feel His heart toward others.** At this point we will never "feel" ready to interact with these individuals. LOL...Just do it, and have fun.

(Says the man who cries all the time)...

“Then Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life.’” John 6:68

Now... what are we going to do about it, my dear family?

Chapter 10

A Simple Plan

Selling my current motorcycle in order to get a larger, more chromed upgrade was simple enough. I asked for the Lord to bless the work of my hands, committed it all to Him, and proceeded to watch as the whole series of events unfolded in such a way that he yet again used something to teach me more about His nature. There was just one snag on my end.

I almost died.

Truly. I had ridden motorcycles for many years, so the thought of driving this cruiser to the buyer down on Long Island in rush hour traffic on a Friday didn't phase me. This is why I found it very odd that the moment I swung my leg over and pulled out to embark on my 2-hour journey last Friday, a sense of dread came over me.

I began to talk with the Lord immediately about it, asking Him to show me what He was trying to speak to me about,

but I could not get a sense of what was going on. By the time I pulled out onto the parkway, following my dad's car (he would have to drive me back) I had begun speaking some serious protection over myself, my dad and our trip. After all, I knew I had a purpose in life.

But the dread only built, and with each passing mile, I knew in my spirit I was hurtling toward some unseen event that was of great significance.

Sadly, my first thoughts were of myself. "Lord, if you don't want me to sell this bike, I'll let it all go. I don't need a nicer one. It's Ok."

I was answered by a rather sudden backfire that, being at highway speed, lurched the bike pretty violently. No release. No relief. Nothing but anxiety.

This went on and on. By the time we had traveled 70 miles I was a mess. I had to keep fighting off visions and vain thoughts of me being thrown over the handlebars. I kept speaking "life" over me, refusing to accept those thoughts. "I have a destiny in you, Lord. I don't accept those thoughts."

"I have a wife. I have 3 children. My time is not yet come. I have a purpose in life. I know this Lord."

Finally... finally... I heard Him speak.

"David, do you think I care enough about you to want you to sell this bike so that you can buy the one you want?"

I am staving off feeling like the devil wants to kill me, and He is asking me about this bike?? Speeding down the highway, the sun setting low, surrounded in glare and traffic, I had the brilliant idea that I cannot believe I never thought of before.

I decided to do what He often does with me. I answered His question with a question.

"Lord, do you love me enough to care one way or another?" I asked, tears actually beginning to well up rather unexpectedly. Just great. Another crying session with the Lord while I am floating on a couch of death doing 65 mph.

I also should have known better. He simply repeated His question back to me... Yeah, well, back at cha' Lord... again.

This went on and on, and to be honest, it was comforting, as it stayed the extreme anxiety I was managing. Then suddenly, another backfire. I switched the fuel to reserve thinking it must be a fuel issue and the result of some work I did on the valve.

A half hour later, another backfire...and another. I signaled to my dad and pulled over. We were 10 minutes to the buyer's house and I had determined that it was not a simple valve issue. No way I could sell the bike.

"Lord, I give this all to you. I trust you. I don't understand what is really going on here at all, but yes, I do believe you

love me enough to be involved in everything I am doing. I do believe you are interested in all of me."

I turned to my earthly dad who had pulled over and stood beside me.

"Let's go home, Dad. No deal. Let's just get off the next exit. I need a moment to think."

I started the bike back up and began to pull out looking west into the sun. I heard the truck only as it was passing. It was swerving to get around me. I had pulled out in front of it. Never saw it at all... and then, with some colorful gestures aimed at me, it and his driver, were gone.

Was that it? That was what all this angst was about?? What a joke I was thinking to myself. I must be getting soft.

I was back up to speed, the bike backfiring constantly now, and heading toward the exit less than a mile away. Very heavy traffic was on either side of me when a thought not my own suddenly popped into my head.

"David, you are going to die now."

The bike lurched one last time... and died. No power. I tried to re-start. No juice. I was a dead stick... on the freeway... in the dusk... without lights, and no throttle.

There was also no chance. Any second I would be slammed by a semi or some other vehicle. There was nowhere for anyone else to maneuver. My speed sloughed

off in a matter of seconds to under 30 and I could feel the wall of air as the trucks swept past me on either side. In times past, and I know in times yet to come, my words would be one of proclamation of protection and authority as a child of God. "No evil shall befall me..." sort of stuff. Not then. I understood finally. I saw it all. I finally saw... Him. And all that He had worked out... in His love for me, to bring me to this place. A quiet calm overtook me. I was at peace in Him. My wife and the faces of my children flashed through my mind and I was OK with it all.

"Lord, I know you love me. It's your love that sustains your children. It all about you. I commit myself to you. Please take care of me now."

I turned toward the shoulder, and as I did a semi swept passed me so close I felt the bike shudder under me. I would be tempted to try to recall all the horns and flashes and bright lights of the vehicles all around me... but I heard nothing, and the only thing I truly do remember seeing was a row of cars stacked up one behind each other as they all broke around me.

I had barely gotten to the shoulder when the bike stopped rolling.

I sat there a while taking in all that had happened. My dad was very patient with me, as he waited for me in silence. Finally, I feebly suggested we look under the seat at the wiring... and there we saw the loose battery terminal.

The bike fired back up to life and my dad and I took some time to praise the Creator of all good things for a few minutes. I later found out that several family members had been prompted to pray protection over my life that night, including my wife. My mom, at dinner with another believer at the time that night, later described to me the exact scene in detail, the Holy Spirit having showed her a vision of me riding moments before the incident, and began praying fervently for me. God is faithful.

While I was surrendering to Him, He was prompting others to take up arms for me. He knew I wouldn't. That night was about gentle love and surrender for me.

And here, perhaps oddly enough is my point. He sustained me not because of any commission I had yet to fulfill. He protected me not because of anything I had yet to accomplish in life. Or because of how much I love Him. Or how faithful I may or may not be...

It was His love that sustained me...

One of my favorite things to look upon are the old relics of toppled statues and idols of cultures past. And so I got to enjoy seeing another one shatter in my own heart that night. That being the idol of self-importance.

In its place He erected a new image.

A much greater one.

One of His love.

Chapter 11

The Egypt Within

*"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
No one comes to the Father except through me." - Jesus*

Can we truly handle the Truth though? That is another question altogether. Only one Person can ask that, really. Our Lord. In His fierce jealousy for communion, He will ask me that very question from time to time.

I have been to Egypt. Twice actually. Well... sort of.

I've dreamed about the place, to be more accurate. I'll be brief here, and perhaps a bit uncharacteristically shallow on emotion (we all need our breathers at times, right?)

So... I was standing outside a large open area, lush and green and enjoying the intense heat baking my skin coupled with a warm offshore breeze. I had a turbin-like covering on my head and I wore the robes and attire of a prince. I strolled along to a large recessed rectangular pool

area. One would step down the very steep stairs, look into the water, and see a dozen crocodiles frenzying about in spasmodic gestures. One moment perfectly still, then a lighting fast twitch, then still again.

Peering more intently, I suddenly understood the cause of this type of movement. You see, they were all jostling for position. It was feeding time. And tiny children were of course, the meal.

I looked up and over to my left to see an Egyptian soldier toss a few more babies into the pool and the frenzy would start all over again. Someone came beside me, looked casually at the event, and asked if I would join them for a walk...

My stomach lurched. My mind went on tilt and I began to cry and heave. Everything around me faded and all I was aware of was the anguish of utter torment at the loss of these innocent ones. Eternity seemed to pass before me as I shrieked and wailed. At some point, I realized I was doing this in my bed. The turbin I had clawed over my face was now the pillow cover, still tangled about my head.

In a similar fashion today, the lost are not capable of understanding what they are doing. They are blinded and their hearts are calloused. We, the church, are their only guide, only compass, and only hope.

What are we doing about all this, my dear friends and family?

“You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost its savor, how shall it be salted? it is thereafter good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” Matthew 5:13

It was several days before I could eat again after that "dream." I can still recall it as if I had just woken up from it moments ago and sat to type. Something inside me died that day... yet another dirge of sorts. A burning ship filled with the gold and wealth of this world was set aflame on my own personal Viking funeral within my heart.

Life became a bit more simple. That tiny suffering left me with a deeper, more passionate longing to see His goodness revealed to His lost. What gave birth was more revelation of Him.

He is calling His Church to pick up His burden, His heart, His love.

As for me? Well let's just say that dream has not yet completed the work in me that is required... but Dad is doing something about that.

There are more "Egypt's" to visit. Of that I am quite certain. I also am quite okay with it. It's the dead, Egypt within; that decrepit carnal-minded man we died to that needs more purging from me. Above all things though, His interactions with His children, however they come, reveal and release something else within... something far greater than any pain we will ever need to endure...

They release His Love.

Brothers and Sisters, I wanted to take a moment and encourage you all with this thought from our Savior.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." - Jesus

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus is talking to His CHURCH - not unbelievers - not the "lost." He is talking to His Redeemed. Being redeemed is not the END of our journey... it is the beginning.

Accepting Christ creates a door that WE must open. He knocks on it every second of the day. There are no "works" of self-righteousness here. Self-righteousness hides the door handle from us. The handle to this door is found in submission and acceptance of who He is - and who you are as His child and beloved Church.

The door handle is found in Jeremiah for starters:

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." Jeremiah 31:3

Opening the door of our heart to Him is simply accepting His love for us and returning it. We love Him in response to the level we are aware of His love for us. Find out how much He loves you.

Where heart-felt understanding of this ends, self-righteousness begins (this includes groveling, confessions of unworthiness, self hatred, self pity: all of which are forms of ungodly/false humility).

Find just one other child of God who desires to sit and worship Him. Not in false humility. Not in groveling about the sins of our past. Praise and worship Him for the fact that we have an amazing Dad who wants to sit at a table and just talk with us!!

How many of you would enjoy spending time with a friend or spouse that would only talk about how they are unworthy of spending time with you?? What if they would rather clean your dishes and mop your floor and wipe the bathroom tiles instead of enjoying a cup of coffee and some hot food together?

Have the courage to reject the false humility of self-righteousness and spend time with Him. Agree with what He says about His child.

Who are we to contend with what His Word says about us? Do we really think this pleases and blesses His heart?

He LOVES His Church... He loves YOU. Are you really going to contend with this Truth? Are we so arrogant? Are we that prideful and unbroken before Him? I have been there. It is overrated.

What do we really want more of? Is it a revelation of His love? or the comfort of our secure, painful belief systems?

See! There He is... even now... He is knocking.

Your Flawed Brother,

David

(I would highly recommend getting the book "The Jesus Story Book Bible" written by Sally Lloyd-Jones - for your children AND you. I read it regularly.)

Chapter 12

From the Mouth of Babes

It seems that lately I prefer things that are laying within children's reach to be without many moving parts. Moving parts tend to get dismantled by the rather inquisitive little fingers of my children.

This past week I entered my bedroom and was greeted with a rather Gabriel-esque proclamation from my 5-year old, Daniel. An open lid glass jar filled with pennies lay on the floor. Instantly, that jar represented only one thing to me: a prophecy not yet fulfilled in the form of coins spewed everywhere.

"Rachel broke the lid to the penny jar, Dad. You need to fix it."

Having just arrived home from a long work day, it was just about the time to help round up the herd for the night. I was hungry, tired and a bit irritated we missed a deadline at work... and someone emailed me asking prayer for a nephew with terminal cancer. That was on my mind a teeny bit as well...

So... the timing for this "issue" was not necessarily bad... I mean if you think about it, when is it ever really inopportune to divert your time in order to fix an unexpected problem one had no intention of investing energies into? On top of that, is it really such a "bad thing" to attempt to fix something that makes me feel as though I just got a haircut and haven't showered yet? I mean, is clawing my eyes out really such a bad idea? This form of stress relief is a good thing, right? Who needs eyesight?

So here I am, jar lid contraption in hand, trying to envision how all these "extraneous" parts are to be utilized. Do I really need a penny jar. Will my 3-year old, Rachel, really miss it? Why did man invent the penny anyway...? May the Lord call that person to task on the great Day of Reckoning... yes I shall pray for that poor soul...

After several minutes I decided my self-worth, and humbly I must confess, Rachel's pleasure in this penny jar, was not in any way being called upon to determine the future of this problem, and I announced defeat.

Daniel, thumb in mouth, with what seemed like a very casual demeanor while lying on my bed, was watching me silently the whole time.

"I can't fix this Daniel. It's broken. I need to throw all this out."

I got off the floor and began to wash my hands. Thumb still in mouth, Daniel called out in a muffled voice.

"Dad, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Look at that. My son learned a scripture verse. He is letting me know he memorized something. How sweet. I was so frustrated and wanting to just settle the kids in bed, I had made no connection as to why he was telling me this... at all.

"That's right Daniel!!" I proclaimed. "That's in Philippians. Chapter 4, I think."

"Philippians 4:13, Dad. So what you just said is a lie."

"I didn't lie, Daniel. It is time to go to bed. I never lie...ever. You know that."

At this point, Daniel popped his thumb out of his mouth, which I knew meant business of some sorts.

"Dad, you just said you cannot fix that jar. That is a lie."

Completely blind-sided to the build-up of my son's declaration, I had nothing to say except confess I was wrong. I then admitted aloud my sin to the Lord in front of Daniel. Before leaving the room I declared to him, "Daniel, I will fix this tomorrow. Thank you."

And so it goes... that from the mouths of children His truth will be proclaimed.

In a similar fashion, God is raising up those who will bring fresh insight and offer truth and encouragement to the Body. If those who are supposed to be the ones speaking truth and wisdom are not in alignment with The Lord's Word, He will speak it through someone else. The Lord used my son to remind me of an invaluable principle:

We must never allow circumstances to lead us into contending with God's Truth. This is never more true in this hour than for those who are our elders within the body.

"Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants, You have ordained strength," Psalm 8:2

Shalom,

David

Chapter 13

When Deep Calls to Deep

I play the bagpipes, but these days I hear only drums. Deep, guttural beats calling deep within me.

There is a relational vacuum in the Body of Christ in this generation. The teachings of what it truly means to be a Child of God, and all the terrifying beauty that comes with that ordination have been mostly discarded and replaced with teachings of comfort and wealth and tolerance.

There is so much more for us. Even as the whirlwind of the “Time of Jacob's Trouble” looms closer and closer, I also perceive another whirlwind.

His love is stirring up within the Valley of Dry Bones. There is a remnant coming forth who will answer the midnight call as her Lover thrusts His hand through the locked latches of our hearts.

He is calling us. I can hear the beating of the drums in the late watches of the night. It wakes me up. Literally. I must talk with Him. I must speak to Him. I can hear Him calling,

"Come..."

I am so far from being perfect it's laughable. Ask those who spend time with me. I can be volatile and moody. Sullen and irritable, with the occasional "Yeah, God bless ya too... jerk," thrown in for good measure.

But...

I can also pray. And man... the peace that I find when I just sit with Him for a little while. After my wife, Maija has gone to bed, and I have finished my rounds throughout the house I can also perceive something else calling to me.

The cares and joys of this world. They beckon. They whisper. They speak softly to me these days.

"Come, let us reason together. It's been a while..."

I ignore them. Yes... life can be cruel. And yes, for those of you pondering the question: bagpipes do in fact hold grudges, I assure you. They take it out on my fingers and my ears. But that's Ok.

Here is the point of this though. Last night, when I sat quietly in my chair, He gently spoke to me, but not about myself. He spoke to me about all of you. He is calling all

his children to Himself. He is speaking to everyone's hearts in this generation as never before. And here is the great kicker about it - none of you can call me crazy because I know you are feeling the same low, bass undercurrent of drums beating afar off in your own hearts. That tug you feel standing in line at the store? That is Him. That odd something you think you have forgotten that leaves you just a bit sullen without any understanding why? Him. The feeling of a loss when you have a silent moment, when the phones are not being texted or the radio turned up... yep. That is the Spirit of God.

He loves you all. He is calling you to Himself. In Him are things that cannot even be described adequately.

Please, don't fear holiness. Don't fear what you may start to "give up." If ever I asked anyone to borrow my "faith," trust me now. There is a Sabbath Rest for those who enter into that secret place with Him. Don't know what I mean by "a" Sabbath Rest? Try to imagine a cessation of all things that restrict and pull and cling and clutter and drain and dry your soul. He is our Sabbath. He is inviting you each to enter in.

Life can be cruel... and I am seeking something more. Something beyond it all. Something that "Cruel" can never touch. You know the way there as well.

Just follow the sound of those drums....

Chapter 14

Coming Home

Home.

I am more reserved these days.

I tend to be a bit more quiet as I go about the day both in and outside my house. I always wanted a large piece of property that would be a safe haven for the weary traveler... even if that traveler lived a town over.

I envisioned huge expanses of grass and trees and a border set way back from the road, barefoot on a field where trees and plants and things that grow are closest to my heart. This is when I am most able to make sense of the madness I see around me.

When I am not pulling back my hunting bow or striking in the bagpipes that is.

Those who know me, however, could not call me a tree-hugger I don't believe, and if a three-hundred-year old oak means my loved ones not losing toes, it's coming down. (My apologies for being real :)

These days though, as I look back on the convictions of my youth, my vigor, my ambitions, my desires... a long exhale cannot be helped as I look around me. So many things are not what I had imagined. So many things have changed.

I do not yet possess that "perfect" property, and work competes for the time I would most certainly rather be spending sitting around a cozy fire in my backyard with family. A cigar languidly transitioning between hand and mouth. The picture perfect conditions needed to assure my worldly rest are far from me. Even Christians must strive for this, the fallen system teaches and mandates.

But more than ever, His peace is upon me. I find the irony of this amusing.

The truth is, I never really had anything to begin with. All I ever really, truly possessed was Him. There is a quiet rest that has overtaken me these days as I have pressed into the love of my Father more. I am only now beginning to realize, little but little, that my circumstances just don't seem to determine my joy the way they used to.

Perhaps this is why my arrows still need to be re-fletched and my pipes are just a wee bit dusty these days.

One of the greatest deceptions that this generation has bought into, was that to live a life in Christ, would mean giving up the passions of ones' heart. Nothing can be further from the truth.

He placed them there. When I play my pipes, it is never so sweet as when I am recognizing He is sitting next to me, enjoying His own gifts, expressed through His own friend. I do suppose this is why I long to sit with my true family more and more... just recline somewhere in a corner and enjoy them. Those of you that are afar off are thought of and loved more than you'll know.

Herein lies the juxtaposition. The more we enter into His rest, the more we are truly free to be who we were designed to be, and the less drive I have to compete for any validation. My gifts are free. I am free to just...be. I am home in Him.

It may seem a bit stark in contrast with what is on the Lord's heart for these days. Events are unfolding with alarming speed. Time truly is short... and yet we have all the time in the world in Him. And all the peace of that Kingdom while we are yet still here.

It is with this in mind that I come to you all with the comfort and exhortation that seeking Him... is like nothing that can be substituted in the world.

He is our treasure, our Peace, our all... if we let Him be so.

If we let Him be...Our home.

“All my fountains are in you.” Psalm 87:7

Chapter 15

Purpose and Reality

My children are growing up literally as I look at them. Just yesterday, I came home to look into my 3-year old, Rachel's eyes and saw some unknown cognition had clicked inside her. She was older.

This morning, Daniel conveyed to me a dream he had where he and his siblings were looking for black bears to hunt down in some wooded location. Not yet five, he displays a courage and gentle fierceness often overlooked due to his tenderheartedness. As I got ready to leave for work, my own mind began to think on young David. He too chased down such animals... and I wonder if it started in his dreams as well.

Someday I shall ask him myself.

"But David said to Saul, 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your

servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.” 1 Samuel 17:34-36

There are some very old rites of passage in some cultures. Each one of them holding to certain traditions that once completed, officially announce the passing of boy from child into manhood.

These events are specific, singular acts that can be reflected upon as one grows older. Within those cultures, there is never a question after that point in time as to whether that person is considered a "man" or not.

A certain old Indian ritual is to have a boy's father, uncle and some older men of the tribe walk the boy deep into the woods at night, to a predetermined location where he is to sit. He is then blindfolded and told he must remain that way until he feels the morning sunlight on his face. At dawn, having braved the entire night in complete isolation, the boy returns to the village, then being introduced and forever welcomed by the community as a man.

With a final hug and reassurance, his father's eyes are the last thing the boy sees as the cloth covers his sight. Then the branches and underbrush can be heard being crushed and snapped as the small company of men retreat back to the safety of the village, leaving the boy to his solitude.

The blindfold must never come off.

As he hears the sounds of the jungle all during the night, he must draw upon all his courage and mental fortitude. All his father's teachings and life lessons are brought to bear on this very singular moment.

How many of those lessons were squandered? Which ones were allowed to be sown deep within the child's heart.

Every sound seems amplified, which serves to magnify what the child is thinking, believing and drawing upon. Sleep comes to some, not so much for others. One thing is constant in every event though. As the boy, moments away from now officially becoming a man, feels the morning warmth, hears the nocturnal sounds give way to morning activity...

He lifts the blindfold...

The first thing he sees is his dad sitting directly across from him, less than a dozen feet away. His father was there the entire night, making sure he was safe. His son was never alone.

Ever.

The sons and daughters of the living God walk through similar experiences that are created by the hand of our Heavenly Father. Their purpose is to allow us to draw upon all we have been taught on that subject, and galvanize it forever through our own experiential rite of passage.

“For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Hebrews 5:12-14

We are not meant to re-live the same fears, expressed in numerous and different circumstances. They are meant to be used to draw upon what we learned in the prior encounter. Disappointments, rejection, insecurity and pride. These are signal flares lighting up the darkness of the carnal mind. They are beacons, encouraging us to get away from the rocks of "dark" thinking. They let us know we are not resting in the new mind we have through the Holy Spirit living in us.

“The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” 1 Samuel 7:37

Many of us are going through seasons of pushing through hurts, pains, and above all fear. These circumstances are intended to transition us from an aspect of spiritual immaturity to maturity. From childhood to manhood in whatever arena these trials touch. I want to remind you of two main aspects of these trials.

The first is understanding the Purpose. You are meant to enter into a deeper, richer, fuller aspect of His nature. This is the purpose of a trial. Said another way, a trial is an event or experience, singular or seasonal that is being used to refine our faith. (2 Peter 1:1-8, James 1:3) You are meant to walk in a deeper revelation of Him as a result of this trial. Do not squander it or contend with the season. Recognize it. Agree with its purpose. It is hand forged by Father out of His love for you.

The second is just as wonderful. It's a revelation of a deep, beautiful Reality. He is with you always. When young David ran toward that Philistine, though no one saw it, David knew this already. The lion and the bear taught him this truth. David grabbed hold of it. He took possession of that reality for himself. The trials served their purpose. David had already entered into a deeper rest in his God as a result of them.

Realize this: the confrontation with Goliath was NOT a trial.

The trials were somewhere out there on that lonely grazing pasture. Somewhere between that first lion and the last bear that dared roar against a child of the living God. By the time that young boy entered the Hebrew camp and stood before King Saul, his brothers, and all the other quaking soldiers, David had already accepted the invitation, and entered into the deeper walk that was invited him through those challenges. The confrontation with the Giant represented only one thing to David. A slaughter.

Please, remember this.

“See, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20

You are never alone.

Ever.

Chapter 17

*"Greater love has
no man than this..."*

Sunrise. Sunset.

Water...and the laughter of children before the age of accountability.

Pure innocence.

The smile from an old person whose outward appearance long ago began to belie the vitality of their heart. At times I can pass a person and almost perceive the tipping point in their life, when their inward strength has superseded their outward vigor. These gazes touch my heart most deeply. I want to grab hold of their leg and look up at them on my knees...

"I see you..."

They need to know there is a Redeemer and a Father who carried the greatest of all unfathomable pains... for them.

To save another child's life as one being snatched from the fire of Hell itself... that honor is beyond my deserving. It's all about love. Nothing more and nothing less. My Dad in heaven has entrusted those housed in frail vessels of honor to hunt down the nomadic sons and daughters of His Kingdom. Would someone do that for my own children? Out there, just past the shroud of dusk... out there where it is so dry and dusty and bleak. Would someone just bring them a cup of cold water?

I think there are some. Yes, there are. I know some such people. They are my brother's keepers. And this too is love.

Of all the things I shall miss though, it will be the feeling of a gentle breeze on my face, that cools me and dries all tears after a good, cleansing release when my heart can no longer contain a pain. The grass is never so soft, nor the sky so blue, nor the rain so refreshing. To me, there is nothing more beautiful than perceiving the Hand of Love on my heart once I have let go and let Him...

"Feed my sheep."

"It's a hell of a thing... loving this life so much and knowing I don't belong here... knowing this is not my home and that the world is not even worthy of His Redeemed. (Hebrews 11:38)

Love mingled with pain. I shall miss this the most...
Or will I?

Chapter 18

Touching the Father's Heart

It was a good week. But where to begin?

How often have I sat in my chair at night, praying to my King, asking for His touch, not realizing He is already right there... inside me... longing with great passion, for me to simply reach out and grab hold of Him? Like the prodigal child, often my mindset is to beg, rather than meditate on what I already have as His son. During the course of my walk I have found that though we drown the old man in the baptism of Christ, the carnal mind can hold its breath a very long time. So I must decide to die to it... just as the Word says. (Romans 6:6)

“My beloved put in his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart was thrilled for him.” Song of Solomon 5:4

A certain woman in Scripture was slowly bleeding herself to Sheol. For well over a decade, she endured the steadfast grip of death slowly ringing the life, vigor and vitality from her body as she grew more and more frail under her unknown malady. We all know this person. She is commonly referred to as "the woman with the issue of blood." So often I have thought on that lady and how I am, regrettably so, frequently not like her, but rather like all the others that were touching Jesus at the same time.

Everyone there was touching our Lord's clothes... but only she was touching His heart.

Please understand what I am saying. The Word states that without faith (belief) it is impossible to please the Father (Hebrews 11:6). This is a relational, not a positional statement. Positionally, we are already and always fully pleasing to Him. (Colossians 1:21-22)

Pleasing Him by faith is a relational statement. We are in a relationship with our Lord. There are things that bring Him incredible pleasure and joy.

Accepting He is a good Father, and daring to believe He loves us so much...that just touching His clothes will unleash that boundless love in the form of life and healing, blesses God. It touches His heart. It really does.

Whenever we are in agreement with His Word, we are posturing ourselves to fellowship with Him. We fellowship in spirit and in truth. Without being in

agreement with His truth on a matter, there is no fellowship in that area of our lives. (John 4:24)

Too many of us just don't realize that when we begin to accept how much He loves us, that we begin to feel His love, His thoughts and His passions. This is His heart.

And thus begins my story...

This past November, I was walking the retail store that I am manager of. Something was truly vexing me, and I desperately wanted to know His mind on the matter.

You see, He is the one who is touching our hearts. Moment by moment, He speaks to us about His love for His beloved, if only we would stop and listen. How often I have said to Him, "Lord, would ya just stop telling me how much you miss my company for a minute... I am trying to ask you if you love me!"

"Just sit with me, David." was what I heard stirring deep in my spirit, over and over and over.

It was all rather frustrating. How could the Lord not possibly understand I was trying to listen for His voice? So how the heck can I hear His voice with Him speaking to me so loudly? As the morning passed however, my self-centered drive was slowly replaced with His peace as I reluctantly made the transition to put my agenda aside to listening to His leading. In doing so, little by little I began to realize I was becoming more and more aware of the people around me and less cognizant of myself.

And then it happened.

Suddenly, as I stood there on the sales floor watching the interaction of everything around me, I saw... *Him*.

I saw the Lord in every person I gazed at. I saw each person as unique, wonderful, special, cherished and one of a kind. Every feature on each face was beyond beautiful. All I could feel was love for every one of God's children. Not only that, but I could feel the love of the Creator emanating through every person simply by the nature of their very existence. Before me was a room filled with priceless artifacts, hand sculpted before the foundations of the world were ever formed... and I could feel the Artist's touch and view His personal signature on each masterpiece. Like a snowflake, no two were the same.

I had an intense, almost untenable desire to connect with everyone I saw in some unique personal way. To let them know how valuable, loved and wonderful each of them were to me and to their Dad. A customer I had never met walked past me and I tried to choke out a hello but could not muster the words. I simply wanted to hug him. I had felt this before to varying degrees but never on this level. I was simply touching the Father's heart. *Once I let go my agenda, my drive, my fears, His Sabbath rest was upon me - which is always available to His children.* I had simply allowed myself to enter into it. Once again, I was incredulous with myself as to why I resisted Him for so long... and why I continually do so.

Silently, I asked God to hide me away - make me disappear from sight so that I could just bask in His love and heart in the midst of His Creation, and for the first time I had merely an inkling of what God meant when He said the whole earth is filled with His glory. (Isaiah 6:3) I began to think on the words where Jesus said He did only what He saw His Father doing and I began to thank God for forgiving me of my worthless self-righteous endeavors and Holy Roman Crusades that were birthed out of many things - just none of them from His heart.

And then I saw a man.

Pain was etched on his face as he was heading toward the door and I could tell by his gait he was managing tremendous discomfort. I stopped him at the door, asking what was bothering him. He told me he was going in for his third back surgery and that even with the invasive procedure the doctor's had little hope for him. His lower spine was in ribbons and though he was only in his 40s, he would be forced out of his construction livelihood and into a very fearful early retirement. I offered to take the box he had just purchased out to his car and walked him out. At his vehicle, I quietly asked if he would be offended if I prayed for him.

It was not that I felt I "should" pray for him, or that, as I myself have so often said and heard, "I knew I was supposed to..." It was that I loved him. Love compelled me to bless him. Nothing more and nothing less. Love in the form of seeing how special a creation of the Lord this man was, and love expressed in the form of rage that one of My Father's children was in pain.

I simply placed my hand on his shoulder, choked back some tears and softly spoke Life into his body. I commanded in the name of Jesus that the pain would cease and never return. I then hugged him and told him to keep in touch. That was just before Christmas.

This past week he walked into the store with a box of cookies. Walking right up to me he said, "David, since my twin brother died 14 years ago I never believed in God. But I felt something in my body when you prayed for me. I have no pain in my back for the first time in years and I know it was not the surgery. You made me believe there is a God again. I came back here to tell you. Thank you."

Then he handed me the cookies, gave me a hug, smiled, and walked out.

The power of the Gospel is a kaleidoscope of gifts within the Body of Christ, meant to be expressed in many forms, with each form applied uniquely as needed. But all forms are meant to express one thing:

The Father's Heart.

The ability to convey the heart of the Lord toward His child, is what changes the person. It is what transforms others and sets the captives free. Jesus came to restore us to Himself, and to give us the power to do that for the world.

"Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things;

you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'"
John 21:17

Two millennia ago, on the eve of Christ's birth, the host of heaven exhorted man to not be afraid. Now, as each day marks the return of the King drawing nearer, I also rally you with the same words.

The world needs to be fed. We do not need the world. It needs Him. The strength and splendor of the lost realm of this broken world is smoke and mirrors. The bravado of those who profess to need no Redeemer belies the fear and impotence that results from being estranged from the Life of our Creator. Earth is the footstool of our Father's throne. The coals of His righteousness have been branded into our being. The Holy of Holies is within us to bring forth His light to the lost. They need the goodness of His love to be released to them in power.

Please, dare to see what happens if we would allow the Kingdom to break through our apologetics and mental ascent. Dare to cultivate relationship and not religion. Like the mighty men of old, be bold enough to jump into a pit on a snowy day to destroy a roaring lion.

Dare to touch the heart of the Father... and in doing so...

Feed His sheep.

Chapter 19

Weddings and Funerals

"The fear of man brings a snare: but whosoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Proverbs 25:29

Confessing we have the mind of Christ is not enough to change our thoughts. We must examine what we are believing and drag them, kicking and screaming to the cross. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

The altars of our sacrifices before the Lord are stained with the blood of the carnal minds' lies. Have no pity on what dies there.

Do not mourn it. Spit on its grave.

I had the honor of being asked to co-officiate a wedding for a very dear friend of mine. The Lord had been dealing with me all week on a topic I was not too keen to discuss with Him., and being who I am, I decided to parley my negotiating with the Lord in the form of superficial

compliance. After all, I knew better than to just say "no." I'd have to be more crafty than that to escape His love. And so like Jonah, I purchased a ticket...and took passage on a vessel named "Insincerity."

"Sure Lord. OK. I'll look at this pain I have been carrying around. You bet. Talk with you soon. Can't wait! Later for now."

And so, in seven days time, in the midst of this beautiful wedding, standing at the podium, I read one of my favorite verses to the couple standing before me with a room of witnesses filled to capacity. I felt that all too familiar dull ache from an old scarred over wound begin to get acute. The last thing I am is a stoic person... I knew I was in trouble.

I read.

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish things behind me..."

I stopped. Tears began to well up. I looked deep into the eyes of the groom and his imminent to-be wife. Pain roiled within me. Frantically, I scanned the audience, who were hanging on my pregnant pause. I searched the crowd for something to anchor me. I couldn't find my wife for some reason, but I did find one of my closest warrior-in-arms, a true man of God. Our eyes locked. For the briefest of moments that seemed an eternity. He saw me - really saw

me, and in his eyes I heard his spirit say "It's ok David. Whatever it is, let it go."

I silently wept there as I tried to choke out the last words to speak before turning it over to the other officiate. Clinging to the remnants of whatever self restraint I could muster, I excused myself as fast as I could for the nearest bathroom where I unloaded a lifetime of sorrow in that spotless little stall (Yes. I must admit even in my agony I took note of how clean it looked). Before that porcelain altar I murdered some profound deceptions I carried around inside me up to that point in time about myself. On that day, I decided to put away the carnal mind on an area of His love for me. I said goodbye to "childish things." That wedding was a funeral for me. A funeral without mourning and without regret. I never looked back. Ever.

Why do I share this?

I left the reception that day with a greater sense of rest and peace than when I birthed. A quietness and trust filled me with such peaceful strength that I was incredulous I resisted His leading to remove that painful lie. Was it fun going through that experience? Well... no it was not. Can I fathom the greatness of His love that would not stop until I agreed with His Word regarding me? I can a little bit more now. And that is how He does it... little by little.

This latest study is on just one lie the carnal mind declares as truth: that worth is earned and can be gained and lost.

I dream of a ship often. A huge cruise liner that carries the Bride of Christ. A spotless ship, ferrying a spotless crew on a crystal ocean. Some of the flags on the mastheads have words on them such as "Freedom," "Liberty," "Rest," and "Love" to name a few.

And it is a far nicer vessel than the one I had boarded.
Shalom

Chapter 20

Laying Hands on Lions

Sitting in our minivan, I waited outside a local thrift shop while my wife perused for hidden treasures. A last-minute date night afforded me some extra time to connect and unwind with my most intimate ally and soul mate, and as I waited for her, I took the opportunity to ask the Lord a few questions.

I simply don't consistently reflect His love the way I desire to. Why am I so moody? How is it I rest so easily at times in Him and then suddenly choose not to see people the way He does? On top of all this, I had become keenly aware that depending on what the Lord wants to talk with me about during the late watches of the night, my wife oft-times is honored to wake up to someone who might delicately be best described as "not a morning person." This too, needs to change.

My thoughts were interrupted as another vehicle parked alongside us. Out came four chaperoned adults that I could see where broken in mind and heart. A keen sense of depression and rejection permeated the atmosphere

around them. Words and feelings began to build within my spirit until I perceived a self-hatred coupled with the deepest sense of wounding I ever felt someone carry around without being suicidal. Burdens, heaviness, and conflicting emotions swirled within me as Father was allowing me to enter into their lives for the briefest of moments.

Trying to sift through “who was who,” I hopped out of the car and opened the door for them to enter the thrift shop. I smiled and asked the “caregiver” if I could help in any way. I was looking for what I would call, some “rules of engagement,” and was making myself a servant for the Holy Spirit to use.

The man thanked me with vacant eyes and a one-word reply.

“No.”

Turning toward one in particular, a middle-aged woman, I tried to hone in on anything the Lord wanted to talk with me about. But I just couldn’t dial in. The pain was too great, and I felt overwhelmed. What was worse is that I knew I could not connect with them even if I did indeed gain some sort of conversational inroad. They were all too emotionally guarded. I was locked out of being able to reach their hearts. Helplessness and uselessness began to creep over me, and as the reality of all their pain intensified, so did my sense of despair. The love, compassion and pain for them continued to build, as was that all too-familiar anger that rises like a storm within me.

And my date-night was just getting started.
That's just great...

So I called "game-over." I wanted off that playground. I decided I would pick up my ball and play *church* with the Lord inside the safety of my own vehicle. I knew I would need a few solid minutes to re-adjust to the facade of this realm in order to be somewhat amiable again, and I turned away from the group.

Fumbling slowly for my sunglasses, hot tears already streaming, I prepared to fix my eyes on Jesus and enter His rest. I began my apology.

"Not today, Dad. Sorry. There are too many of them and I cannot reach them all. I am so sorry. There are just too many... I'm so sorry..."

But sometimes the Lord wants to finish what He starts, doesn't He?

"Raise up fishers of men, David."

The Lord was referring to the caregiver. The one who was so broken himself that I had guessed if I was actually addressing the person in charge. How that man was even given custody over these other people was beyond me. He was so crushed himself that societally, he was barely able to function.

"I will tell you about him." The Lord said.

And so, exiting my car once again, sunglasses still on, (a trick I began implementing this past year as it hides the tears until the last moment) I headed inside to find him. As I searched, the Holy Spirit shared with me a portion of this man's story.

Father-God gifted him with a very tender heart. He had so much love to give. His soul was soft to all that was around him. I had never felt such a person before. Pure, innocent and full of wonder was the fingerprint of his soul. The heart of a lion and a king. He was a unique and blessed child.

But...

My whole inner being began to writhe and twist as the Lord pulled back the veil a bit more.

From a very young age the boy suffered terrible scorn and ridicule. The kind that deforms one's entire being from the inside out. His parents were unable to guard his heart and in many instances, were themselves the source of the pain and wounding. Because of the degree of his tenderheartedness he simply was not capable of developing very good external defense mechanisms. He turned inward. With no safe place to hide, he grew up from his earliest days, a small, fragile little boy who slowly began to hate himself. His mind began to darken and his soul began to fracture. A most exquisite stained glass window... now shattered.

Trapped, and with no answers, that boy made a vow to God. If he ever survived his own hell, he would help others to never suffer the torture his heart was enduring. He would guard *the others...* to the death.
A *true* shepherd.

I passed Maija, who was kneeling over something of interest, and as I did, our eyes locked. Everything unspoken was communicated. Smiling up at me, she silently encouraged me to hang in there. She knew I was about Dad's business and went back to her own task at hand.

"Raise up Fishers of men, David." He repeated.

Abruptly, turning an aisle corner, I now saw that little boy. That sweet, gentle, soft, and tortured child slowly shuffling away. His feet barely lifted off the ground with an outward gate that reflected his inward malady. A broad, mountain of a man, he stood head and shoulders above me.

"Sir," I choked out, and introduced myself. *"This might sound strange, but when I saw you a moment ago, I just felt the Lord speaking to my heart about you. It may sound a bit odd but your Heavenly Father wants you to know He sees how much love you have for others..."* Pausing, I attempted to navigate the raging currents within me.

I called upon the Holy Spirit to sustain me; to keep that river of Father's heart from drowning me. All I could see what that boy. I also understood I had to be careful and

gentle. Deep down, underneath, I could feel the tremors of some other hidden, volatile pains within him churning.

I very quietly and very slowly, spoke. I conveyed how Father-God saw the pain he went through growing up and yet how he still chose to love, serve and protect others.

"We can only give to others to the amount we have inside ourselves. You have so much love to give these people you are taking care of. Would you be offended if I prayed for you?"

Ever so gently, as if placing my hand on a lion's mane, I touched his shoulder.

And... I very quietly... gave all I had.

I held nothing back within my heart. My voice quivered and my words cracked. I didn't care. I prayed for the Lord to fill this man with a revelation of how much he was loved. I thanked God for this man, and for him to come to know Jesus as His Savior and Friend. I allowed Father's love to just flow through me and rest upon his heart and mind. I agreed with Heaven that this man would pass along a deep love of God to those he met. It was a tender, soft prayer. I could only give to the extent I myself was capable, and to that limit... I gave all. I finished my prayer and looked up.

Tearfully, he attempted to say something, but all he could manage was the faintest of whispers as he nodded and wept. A flicker appeared in his eyes... just a tiny flicker.

We stared at each other in silence. A lifetime of pain was, for the moment, in reprieve. More than that, an initial balm had been applied. The Kingdom had torn through.

A beginning... This man would one day roar the sound of *The Redeemed*.

I went to give him a soft hug and the Lord thundered in my spirit to refrain. I meekly offered up a handshake instead.

"He sees you.... He wants you to know He sees you and loves you... so much. Thank you. I am honored to have met you. So honored..."

The man said nothing. He simply nodded and tried to blink his vision back into focus. Staring intently at him, I wiped my eyes. Then I placed my glasses back on, turned and walked out.

"Bring the Kingdom." The Lord instructed me some years ago. I am nothing special. Truly. I can be moody, contentious with God, and certainly not always a morning person. But, I do have a will. I do have choices. I get to choose each moment of my life if I will seek to get to know my Dad. We can only release the Kingdom to the degree we are willing to seek and possess it within our own walk. This is why Jesus died for us.

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."

“May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:20

This has nothing at all to do with *works* in order to feed a false, worldly-minded sense of identity. This certainly is *not* about striving to gain some false, self-righteous sense of holiness that flies in the face of the cross that made us holy by the blood of Jesus and that shed blood alone. It is time to put away childish things. We are already *fully pleasing* by what Jesus Christ did... not us.

The Word says we entered into Jesus' death with Him... so we may also live the life He lived here on Earth. Jesus came to show us the Father. If we would find out what that truly looks like, then to that degree of revelation we also will show the will of the Father to those around us. This is called “outflow.”

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:4

This was a humble encounter where Father used an imperfect, turbulent and often immature son, to share the Living Gospel.

Nothing more really...

... and certainly nothing less.

Chapter 21

It's Coming

I am staring at my keyboard trying to get quiet. In the middle of a study being prepared, I am annoyed by a tugging I can perceive in my spirit. I don't like that.

It messes with my agenda. Agenda after all is what makes me a productive member of His Body. Agenda is what advances the Kingdom. Or is the Kingdom advanced by hearkening unto the voice of my Savior? Is it brought forth by the Creator whose raging love for His own will call upon a friend to touch the heart of another in His way, His time, and with His passion?

I forget sometimes, but I digress. Probably because I am annoyed.

I am thinking about John the Baptizer. I am thinking upon the splendor of his life. A man who was related to Messiah Yeshua. Did they play together? Did they ever see who could run the fastest or jump over a sword the farthest? How many times did John knock on the door of the carpenter's house and before the wooden latch even

permitted anyone a glimpse of the visitor would shout, "Can Jesus come out and play?"

Did they walk the dusty streets as they got older, discussing the things to come?

Or, did they never speak? Did the will of the Father quickly whisk them far from each others' circle of fellowship? One went to a lowly agricultural town in the middle of nowhere. The other ventured deep into the blast furnace of God's breaking. How fitting it was a desert.

I don't know. But I do know this. When these two men came together, the Holy Spirit did two things.

One. He tore the heavens open and poured Himself out all over Jesus as the first-fruits of what was to come. The Voice of the Father Himself bridged the two realms, and confirmed the perfection of His Beloved.

Two. The Spirit of God permitted John to bear witness to all this.

"Behold the Lamb of God. This is the One..." (John 1:29-)
John even politely attempts to dissuade Jesus from being submersed by him. I have often thought on that scene and the exchange of love that must have flowed through the hearts of the greatest Old Testament prophet and The Prophet.

Fast-forward. In the mire of a submerged black hole of a dungeon the Romans would call a cell, John's physical

senses were speaking so loudly that he questioned everything he ever heard from God. His very commission was crumbling in his mind and heart as his circumstances pressed hard upon his will, convictions and revelations. This man was no stranger to self-denial or discipline. As a man who took the lifelong oath of a Nazarite, he was well acquainted with suffering and loss. He enjoyed consuming a personal favorite of mine - honey dipped insects. He wore a coat that would make our childhood wool sweaters seem like the finest cashmere garment. The Holy Spirit came to John as a trainer comes to his beloved prize fighter at the onset of the opening announcements of a bout and said "It's time, John." He came out of the desert. This prophet was no joke.

And yet... One day, he sends two friends of his to Jesus with a simple, straight forward question.

"Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Luke 7:19

The empathy that Jesus must have felt for John makes my mind go on tilt. A man whose entire existence has been to make Israel's heart ready for her Lamb was unraveling within that abode of Hell where John was chained.

There is someone out there whose circumstances are so contrary to the promises given to them by God that he/she is tempted to toss it all away on the notion of self-delusion. It is not.

I want to encourage you with this: Natural circumstances always oppose the Kingdom of God up until the Kingdom breaks through. If this were not so, the exhortation and proclamation by Paul that we "*...walk by faith and not by sight,*" would be without merit.

Brothers and sisters, we are called to take our place in the halls of those who would see natural circumstances yield violently to God's Kingdom invading the life of His children in fulfillment of His promises. The Heroes of Hebrews obtained their reward by laying hold of that which laid hold of their hearts. Hold fast to the word given you.

Your Redeemer and Author of the story called "YOU" has not put His pen down yet, but the epilogue reads, "Beloved. Conqueror. Victorious. Fulfilled." The Promise is yours. It-is-yours.

Do not let it go.

"So He replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.'" Luke 7:22

My comrade, the redemption of your heart's desire as He proclaimed to you is overshadowing you even now. It is carried more fiercely than all the wonders and terrors of the Old Testament. You are in a whirlwind. But the

whirlwind is not your circumstances my friend. There is only one whirlwind, one that none of us can ever escape.

It is the storm of His love.

“Look up, and lift up your heads for your deliverance draws near.” Luke 21:28

Chapter 22

Something On Our Lord's Heart

Hello family. There is so much confusion in our Land in this hour.

I will share some limited insights the Lord has quietly shown me while I have silently travailed for the body of Christ as well as this nation these past 25 years. Never before is the hour so great for a turn of heart within His Church here in America.

We have rejected our First Love. The Church in America seeks "forms" of Godliness and not Him alone.

The Church in America has also rejected her Commission as a result of our spiritual condition. The Kingdom call that is upon this nation is at risk as a result of the backslidden American Church. One of the main reasons there is so much confusion in the Body of Christ is that the American Church as a whole, has lost the ability to walk in the heart, mind, and intention of the Lord.

We either speak of an angry God and His un-reconcilable judgment upon this nation - or - We preach a message of excessive grace and spiritual & national pride from the false notion that a loving Father would not humble this nation (perhaps we have forgotten this country is not our home) - or - We speak of some twisted old covenant form or "revival" as if the Holy Spirit is not already inside us (WE are the revival- it is the Church that needs to be revived; the Spirit of the Living God works within and through our hearts and spirits to the degree we allow it). A vital component is missing from these camps in the form of the heart and mind of God. Because of this, the messages are lacking His vision.

The heart of God is to restore fellowship, build intimacy, and rescue His lost sheep. This is the fulfillment of the Great Commission which was never rescinded. We are not called to curse one another and we are not called to dismiss sin and worldliness. Above all, we are not called to ignore His lost children who need to see and touch and taste His goodness through the Church.

The Church is called to holiness. The Church is called to love. The Church is called to purity. The Church is called to walk in HIS righteousness... (not our own smug self-centered and self-righteous acts of piety).

From this position of walking *in* Him and *with* Him the Church is then called to fulfill the Great Commission up until we are taken away. The Church is called to share the Gospel message with our dying breath if need be, to those who hate us... in love and power. We, the Church, are

meant to proclaim the Gospel to all the world.... just as someone once did for us while we were dead to Jesus.

The fractured, broken, divided camps of the American Church are not walking in the ways of Jesus Christ from His heart. We have turned aside to the things that please our own carnal desires.

God is calling the Church in America to repent and return to Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. It is the Church that follows and oversees and stewards the heart of God and the mind and will of God over any land, region, area or country. The Church is the peculiar people, the royal priesthood, the holy nation and the ambassadors of Heaven sent to bring the lost to repentance by releasing the goodness of God to a lost and dying world.

We are now either looking to save our own lives in fear and self-preservation... or... looking to the Holy Spirit to initiate some "movement" forgetting that in the New Covenant He now lives IN us. God is waiting for *us*, the Church, to repent and return to His heart... and we will lead this nation back to truth by the power of the Living Witness inside us... the Church. Holiness and Love are what usher the Church to walk in the ways of God. This is how the Church leads this nation back to its biblical foundations.

The Lord's burden that He placed within my own heart is the spiritual condition of the Church in America. We have turned from seeking our First Love. We have sought

programs and statistics and doctrines that are fun and exciting. The Church is supposed to be the light and truth and the Love of the Cross. His redeemed children are supposed to reveal His Love and redemptive plan to a dead people who need salvation.

His redeemed children are meant to get His lost children.

Now about Donald Trump... The Lord did not speak to me about who will win the election. No... the Lord did not tell me who would be the next president. I will tell you this though: Trump is a voice speaking out where the Church is supposed to be, but is either too afraid of the consequences, or too distracted from the heart of our Lord to do so. Please hear me... this is to be spiritually discerned... not carnally. I am not saying that what Trump is "saying" is coming from God. Not at all.

God will use the "lost" to shake foundations that are supposed to be shaken through the LOVING but UNCOMPROMISING voice of the Church. In the end, the future of this nation will be determined by what the Body of Christ does. It is not who sits in the White House who will determine our future. It is the Church. Will the camps and fellowships that are afraid, or bitter, or asleep or compromised begin to change and seek the heart of God?

Will words like repentance, holiness, joy and peace ever be used in the same sentence again?

Will "The Great Commission" be on our hearts once more? Will the word "Hell" ever be spoken of again... anywhere?

Will we ever begin to see His desire for purification inside us as a sign of His longing and affection for deep intimacy? "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49) Will we ever begin to realize this verse is speaking of Love and restoration?

Fire refines. Will the other divided camps in the Body of Christ stop cursing our sleeping brothers and sisters - not to mention the lost in this nation? Will we repent of this hatred? Will we finally at long last, from the love of Father's heart, "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you?"

Will the Church purify herself, seek her Groom first in ALL areas, and begin to seek to fulfill the Great Commission from a pure heart and purified mind?

Where this nation ends up is up to how the Church responds. The Lord has spoken to me about a number of different "futures" for the United States. That is because there are a number of ways the Body can respond.

Discipline begins with the household of God FIRST- it is the Church that is being refined in this hour. This is birthed from His heart of Love, not anger.

The nation is experiencing the natural/spiritual fallout that occurs when the born-again Christians in America stop leading the nation by example, holiness, prayer and obedience to God. The Church is meant to lead this nation under the power and direction of the Lord Jesus Christ. This comes only through deep communion with Him. It is the condition of the Church and how we chose to respond

in this hour that will determine what the future holds for this nation.

I beg you all... pray for those hidden ones who are called to bring forth the full counsel of the Lord in this hour; that they may come forth. We all have a part to play and we do not all have the same part... there are those who are called to share His heart. Pray for them... this is what is needed more than ever in this hour. We need clear voices that are seeing what God wants to do in the American church in this hour and are willing to share it without compromise, and without hatred in their heart, but rather speaking the counsel of the Lord in love.

Ever so humbly,
and in His love-

David

To My Family Abroad~

To those of you who have been asking me how long until America is refined and partakes of the suffering that many of you have partaken: How long until America stops squandering the freedom we have been given to openly commune in spirit and in truth and share His goodness to those dying around us every moment?

My brothers and sisters that I have come to love as my own... I ask for your forgiveness and above all, your prayers for us here in the United States of America... even as I pray for you.

Forgive me, my beloved family. Stay steadfast. Your redemption draws nigh.

Chapter 23

Please...

It's late... I am tired. I feel the strain of the day pulling at my eyes even as I type. Winter fell hard for the first time this season here in NY in the form of some frigid weather. The kind of weather that when exposed to it for very long, invariably sweeps my mind along with the harsh unforgiving wind to places I would rather not go. It's an exercise of great will for me to choose to see things from His perspective when I get this way.

I think on the homeless; how their warmth and even survival is much dependent on their innovative craftiness... and fortuitous happenstance that often comes in the form of large, dry cardboard boxes unexpectedly unearthed from behind dumpsters. Garbage bins are filled with what would have been a banquet for another, if only its contents had not so quickly and thoughtlessly been scraped off a plate as refuse.

I type this as I stare at an orange I only half finished... because it was bruised.

I think on the widows too. I am thinking about a certain woman in particular who is too frail to start her own generator when the power goes out. I check in on her from time to time. She devours books... alone. Alone and without the solace of knowing she is never truly in solitude. But I am working on that. She knits a lot too. Quite awfully I must confess in the eyes of the blind, but to those that see...the most wonderful outpouring of a person's heart. An aspect of the Creator, gifted to the soul of a precious daughter in the form of expression. They are beautiful quilts indeed. How much more beautiful they would look if soiled, tattered and faded, lying in some disgusting city alley....pulled tightly around someone.

And so...

I ask you to pray for those in need. Prayerfully consider the commandment to look after the widows, the elderly, the orphans. There is always a way to obey His Word. Human compassion has little if any eternal value in the Kingdom. It's just another form of humanism. But intercession and acts of service birthed out of time spent seeking the Father's heart... that is something that can shake the very foundations of the world.

Or even just the towns we live in.... Shalom

Chapter 24

He Draws Closer

New Year's Eve.

Being the person I am, I have always been at odds with this day. The idea of wishing in the "new" has been replaced in my heart with the prayer of agreement with what the Holy Spirit wishes to birth in His Bride this coming season. The melancholy chant of "Auld Lang Syne" has many years ago been replaced with Keith Green's classic "So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt" as I reflect on not what has passed, but what eagerly awaits the children of the Redeemer, and whether I truly want it.

Passages such as Philippians 3:13 *"...forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead..."* and 1 Corinthians 13:11 *"when I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child, but when I became a man I put childish things behind me,"* well up inside me and it is of little surprise that the spirit that is in communion with His Spirit sees things differently.

Nostalgia, tradition, customs... where do they take us? How many things still lie dormant within me that shackle me to the lineage and fallen mindset of man's traditions rather than on Christ?

And so it is... that New Year's Eve finds me home, with my children in bed and a dim light by which I type these thoughts as I get ready to ask the Spirit of Truth to once more shine in my heart and set me free of... *anything. Whatever He wants. Let this season be a season of more liberty. More Truth revealed. More joy.*

More....**Him.**

And even so, the man which is dead in us (Galatians 2:20) still whispers from the edges of that light. He demands an audience. When ignored he will scream, and ultimately beg and cry to be heard. He pleads. He implores and asks me to be reasonable about my ever pressing on into the deeper things of God.

"Let's not get too carried away, David," the old man will tell me. "We will lose our ability to minister to people, if we become too sold out. One must maintain balance."

A lie.

I recall a season around this time of the year when the gentle guile and soothing voice of carnality wooed me toward looking back. Pain, loss, sorrow and grief filled the view of my soul until my heart was bursting. It was then that I cried out to my Savior for His mind, His thoughts,

His heart and His vision. This battle took place on a quiet night a couple of years ago. The arena was my son's room and in that evening, on the other side of a torn and rent heart, a heart that broke as the ground breaks before the exhaustive drought just preceding the latter rains of due season, I came away with a peace and Sabbath rest that has never left me. I wrote about that experience and I hope it works its way into the hearts of the reader in the form of encouragement. That its words may minister calm and peace to the restless spirit would be a great gift to me. The title in my journal and on the website was called "The Tree" (shared in the following and last chapter).

Brothers and sisters, we look forward. We press on. We rejoice, for the Redemption of all the world draws closer with every breath we take. Tradition has a place. Nostalgia has merit. But nothing... nothing, can remain exalted above the One who purchased us with His blood. If it's not drawing us to Him, it will ultimately estrange us from a revelation about Him that He desires to impart. There can be only one way to see things. It's His mind in us that produces Kingdom life.

I pray that every one of His children, and all who gaze upon this humble offering of exhortation, know His peace in the coming year as never prior, and above all else, know Him.

Maranatha...

Chapter 25

The Tree

Not long ago, I found myself taking a side road near home after a restful hour of driving. It was my day off and I decided to have some quiet time on the road. I needed to breathe. I needed to take in the air and feel the freedom that comes to me when I realize I am in the strong arms of my Heavenly Dad. On the old county roads around rural New York I get lost in the views that sprawl out on all sides of me. Rolling pastures and green, lush fields are adorned with wildflowers that manage to blossom under the relentless grip of mid August's pride. My heart always swells with a calm content when witnessing objects of beauty flourish under such harsh conditions.

Something compelled me to make a left, and I felt His peace as I consented, turning down another dirt road. Rock walls swept passed me on either side and I began to praise my Lord as I took in the rows of corn fields swaying confidently in the afternoon breeze. Several blackbirds were shrieking the cry of the triumphant as they swept low and out of sight behind the stalks and I was confident that at that moment they too were praising the Creator of

slower creatures. Above, some high altitude wisps of vapor were making their way light heartily eastward and a blue I rarely see was painted across a broad expanse of sky as I crested a slight hill. Sipping my coffee, I turned onto an unfamiliar road I suspected might escort me to my main route not far from home. I could feel the presence of His Spirit and I was, at that moment, already home. Home in Him. Home with Him. Free from care. All my uncertainties of life and the questions that regularly arise with the daily interaction with a people estranged from their Savior were stilled. Suddenly, I sensed I was not alone. All that I saw, it seemed, was calling out for Father's special touch. I had made my way up this road and found Jacob's Ladder all around me. Heaven and earth had mingled. All of creation was crying out to their Master and I was caught up in the middle of it.

It was then that this little dirt road quickly descended a hill, turned sharply and I found myself passing an old farmhouse on the corner of the road that ended and forked into a main street. I pulled the truck over. Something was wrong. An unseen itch racked my soul with such agitation I began to bite my lip nervously.

And then I understood. Where this road was so quiet and isolated just on the other side of the hill, it had now ushered me to a highly developed suburban neighborhood. In the blink of an eye I went from "God's country" to the heartthrob of humanity in all its hurried, frenzied futility. But that was not what was wrong. Life ebbs and flows and beauty is to be found in His presence no matter where I sojourn.

It was the old farmhouse. It sat at the corner of the intersection where the old country road met with a newer street. It held the best view of the entire area and I knew immediately that at one time it sat vigil over many hundreds of undisturbed acres. An owner of that old farmhouse generations past once enjoyed a setting similar to what I had just driven through moments ago. Now it was encroached on all sides. Modern raised ranches stood quite rudely only a few dozen yards away, giving no heed to any thought of privacy. A white post fence was all that kept the onslaught of modern advancement at bay, and in the name of sub-divisions and wills divvied up amongst siblings, suburbia had pressed hard upon this sliver of old heritage. The house was slightly tired. It looked weary of having to stare out across neighborhoods and driveways and automobiles that long ago lost the hard chiseled lines of its simpler predecessors. I took a hard look at the fence and tears welled up in my eyes as I realized a fresh coat of paint was recently applied that defied the world to attempt to take anything more. Whatever may have transpired in times past this white wooden sentry would permit no further advancement upon the old farmhouse. "You shall come no closer." It said. "My boarders are set." A last stand.

On the corner of the property closest to the road, stood an enormous elm tree. It shaded most of the postage stamp property and much of the road as well with its farthest branches reaching well past the fence and almost touching some younger trees on the other side of the street. It occurred to me that it was only a matter of time before those branches would be trimmed by the highway dept.

under the money-forged guiding arm of some of the more affluent homeowners of the area. In time the tree itself, standing so close to the road, would be under the hard gaze of the town council.

My peace was gone. Tears now streamed freely down my cheeks as I sat back and looked at the loss of something pure, something that seemed a little closer to God. That farmhouse embodied all that my heart yearned for and that was why it hit me so hard. Simplicity. Peace. An escape from the world and all its madness. Anger began to surge in me as I began to recall memory after memory of people being wronged by others. The weak being trampled by the strong. Those who have no advocate get swept away, and this tiny homestead represented all that was true and honest. Now it was but a shadowy reflection of what it once was. And no one notices. People were washing their cars, walking their dogs, and the pungent smell of charcoal ash which normally represented family and fellowship to me was putrid in my nostrils.

I cried. Long deep sobs that revealed a much deeper pain was lurking beneath.

"Why did you have me turn down this road, Lord? I was so enjoying my time with you. I cannot stand seeing housing developments crop up around old county lands. You know this."

Bitter tears flowed as I surveyed my view that went from a piece of heaven to twisting into near Hell itself for me. My blurred vision caught sight of the elm and I spoke to it.

"I am sorry, my friend."

And then it spoke back. *"It must all be swallowed up, David."*

"What does?"

"Death."

"I don't know what the hell you are talking about, tree."

"Does not the Word say that everything will melt away? That ALL must be consumed? All of creation groans for the redemption of the earth. It longs for the day that all will be swallowed up in death, including Death itself. The triumph of the cross is the re-birth of His creation. Everything must die. And what will be revealed is the new creation. I long for this. I do not fear it or grieve it as loss. I groan in anticipation for it. What you see here must come to pass everywhere.

"You feel the sadness you do because you are trying to hold onto your own life. You are afraid of the death that awaits the world because you do not understand the life that comes after it. All of creation must be redeemed from sin. Everything is speeding toward that end. Do not be afraid anymore. Rejoice in it. True life is birthed from death."

I soaked in the words my Redeemer was speaking to me through His creation. My mind cleared and once again I felt His peace upon me. Not as before. It was a more subdued relief and I understood that some deep mending was going on in my soul by the hand of the Holy Spirit. I

knew that a healing had begun in me, and that this road
He led me down was a beginning. There would be more.
Quite some more I discerned. I sat there a long time.

I started my truck and as I pulled away, said goodbye to
that old elm and to the white fence and farmhouse.

I strongly suspect I will see my friend the tree again. I'll
see him when all of time has taken its time under the
guiding hand of the only One who truly calls all the shots.
I suspect he will have more words of wisdom to offer me
as I stop to ponder some other deep issue of my heart.
He'll be there planted beside another house. Overlooking a
vast field. On another road.

One made of gold.

~Some Parting Thoughts~

I always disliked when a book I was enjoying suddenly ended. It was always a form of loss to me. It was as if I had the subconscious notion that the author and I had connected in spirit and truth, and yet all of a sudden there is no further words...no parting glass...no, "see ya soon."

So, with that in mind, let me say thank you for taking the time to read through these studies. To be completely honest, I had no desire to compose a book, even if much of the material was going to be a "simple" re-structuring of my website. But the Lord had you in mind, my friend.

This book is the result of Father-God's desire to see His Bride grab a hold of something that is seldom, if at all, discussed. I am no one special... at all. Other than to fully and openly acknowledge His righteousness makes me all I care to be (complete, that is).

I want to encourage you. All roads must lead to Him. Lay hold of His jealous desire for your friendship, intimacy, and communion. It yields true life. True peace. It is where the reality of His love is exchanged between you and your Lord.

There will always be those who answer the call to know Him above all things. You are one of those children. You can feel Him calling, can't you? Yep, I thought so...

See ya soon~

David