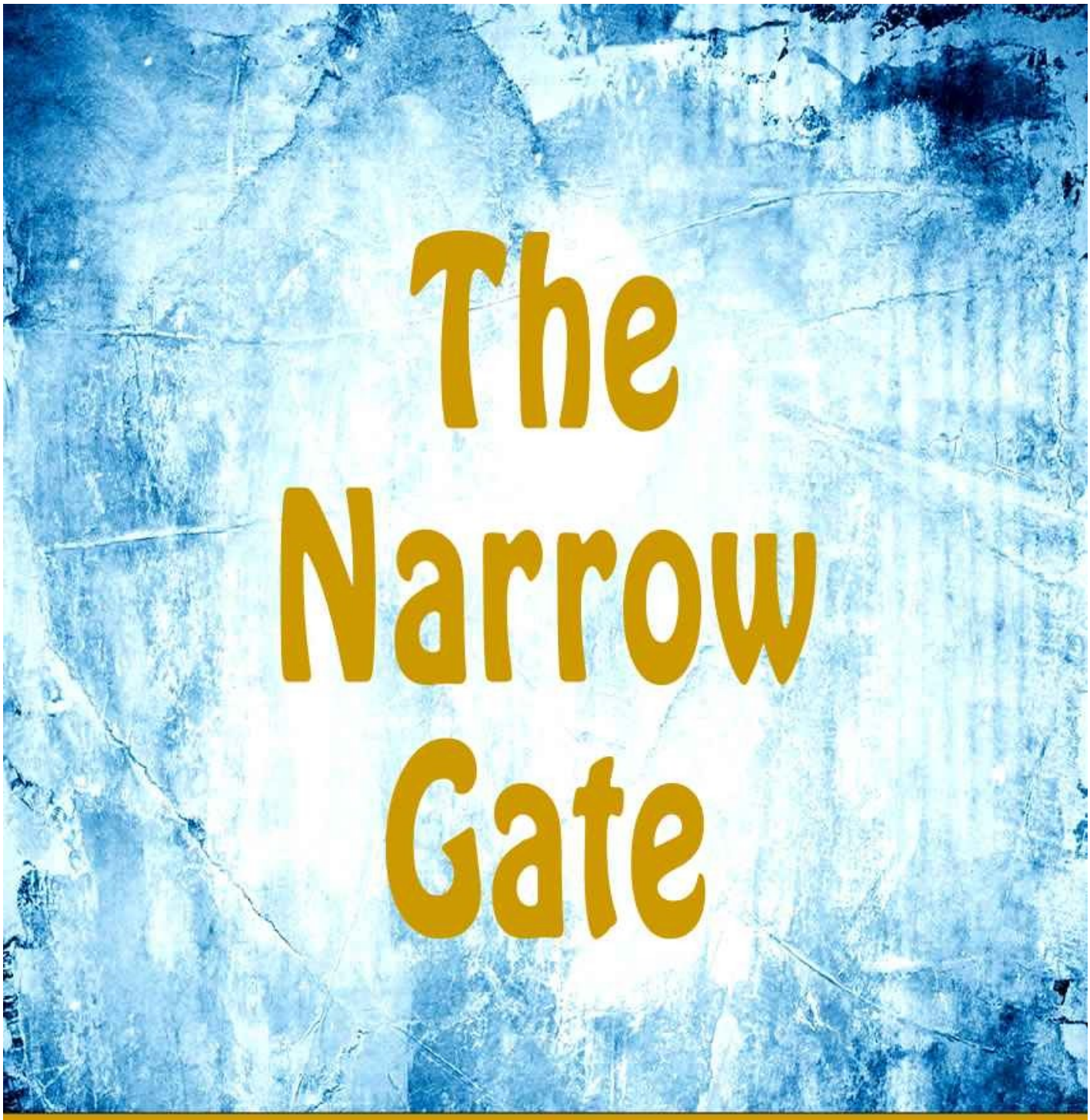


Bible Studies By Scott McConaughey

THE NARROW GATE

A Biblical Examination of the Doctrine of Salvation And the Pathway to Mature Sonship

SCOTT MCCONAUGHEY

THE NARROW GATE – TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION…….. 3

CHAPTER 1 – THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM……. 6

CHAPTER 2 – ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE……. 16

CHAPTER 3 – THE WAY IS DIFFICULT……. 23

CHAPTER 4 – ENTER THROUGH THE DOOR……. 27

CHAPTER 5 – THE INHERITANCE OF GOD……. 33

CHAPTER 6 – WALK IN THE SPIRIT……. 44

CHAPTER 7 – THE BOY CHRIST JESUS……. 51

CHAPTER 8 – JESUS AT THE JORDAN RIVER……. 59

CHAPTER 9 – WALK THROUGH THE WILDERNESS……. 66

CHAPTER 10 – CONFORMING TO THE HEART OF JESUS…… 74

CHAPTER 11 – WALK IN THE WORKS OF THE FATHER…….. 85

CHAPTER 12 – WALKING THROUGH THE NARROW GATE…. 93

THE NARROW GATE
by Scott McConaughey

Copyright © 2003 by Scott McConaughey

Printed in the United States of America

All commercial rights reserved solely by the author. Any part or this entire book may be reproduced and used to edify the body of Christ without permission of the author but may not be used for commercial gain.

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Contact Information
The Gathering Place
Pastor Scott McConaughey

http://scottmc.org/
scottmcconaughey@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! II Timothy 3:1-6

The perilous times of the last days are upon us. The character of people in the world and many in the Church has disintegrated into a moral freefall. As I write this book, the Catholic Church leadership convened to establish a policy on how to handle parish priests who molest small children. A certain Cardinal in Boston transferred a pedophile priest from one parish to another due to complaints rather than remove him from the ministry. Protestant churches are no holier.

The fruit of many American churches is a luke-warm, selfish group of immature Christians who have a form of godliness but do not walk in the power of God. The power of God is to transform the believer into a holy vessel through whom God can flow His supernatural life to the needy world.

Much of the American Church today has become lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, without self-control and ungoverned by the Holy Spirit. Many “Christians” struggle with lust, fantasy, adultery, lying, cheating, rage, worry and selfish indulgence. The fruit the Church has borne in America has its root in the seed of false doctrine being taught about salvation.

An acorn properly planted and nurtured will always yield the fruit of an oak tree over time. An apple seed will produce an apple tree. A pear seed will grow to produce pears. This is the simple “law of the seed” that works millions of times everyday around the world. The word of God has many seeds. When the gospel seed of Christ is properly sown and nurtured, the fruit over time is a mature believer who walks as Jesus walked.

When man tampers with God’s holy seed and plants it in the heart of hearers, the fruit that is produced reflects the nature of the seed sown. The fruit of our churches is evidence that man has tampered

with God's holy seed. Man's engineering has produced a hybrid seed that bears the fruit of consumer-oriented, selfish Christians. God's holy seed will always produce Christ-like vessels when properly nurtured. The unholy hybrid seed that man has created has a false doctrine DNA in it that is corrupted from inception.

The Holy Spirit is burning with passion to correct this doctrine of devils and instill His holy fire and passion in the midst of His people who will go through the narrow gate of Christ and find life that bears fruit to the glory of God. The Spirit will make a holy and spotless Church. He will cleanse the filthy daughters of Zion with His holy fire[1].

The Way of Salvation

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13,14
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me". John 14:6

All Christians agree that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. A proper relationship with Jesus enables us to go through the narrow gate. We understand that no one gets into a Father-"adopted son" relationship except through faith in Jesus. But we do not agree on what it means to go "through Me". What is required for us to enter through the narrow gate of salvation?

Jesus taught us that He is the Door[2], and we know that there is salvation in no other name[3]. But what is involved in this salvation? Is salvation a one-time event or an ongoing work of God in our hearts?

The heart call of God for this hour is that the Church goes through the narrow gate and grows up into Christ-like maturity. We must grow up into the full measure of the stature that belongs to Christ!

The narrow gate is simply a pathway of walking in agreement with Jesus, who is the only way, truth and life there is. We can grow up and become mature sons of God who glorify the Father in all things bearing lasting fruit to His honor. But we must press through the narrow gate and reject the broad road of watered down religious nonsense some offer.

---

[1] Isaiah 4
[2] John 10
[3] Acts 4:12

Those who enter through the narrow gate will become pure and spotless. Those who choose the broad way will be deceived and end in destruction. The choice will become clear as you read this book.

The New Threshold Leads to Hell

Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. When they <u>set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost,</u> with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever. Ezekiel 43:6-9 (underlining mine)

Some of God's people throughout history have set their own threshold by God's threshold. They set their standards next to God's standard. Man's standards allow people to come in under the control of the church leaders rather than under the control of the Holy Spirit. When we change the standards of God, we build a wall between the people and their holy God. This leads to defilement and all manners of sin in the house of God and His anger burns towards the harlotry that is allowed.

Years ago, I went to hear the leader of a popular Christian movement share his testimony and minister. This man had a genuine gift from God and saw hundreds of churches spring up from his ministry. He stated very openly that he felt that it was important to "lower the threshold" so that the average lost sinner would feel comfortable in the house of God.

This translated at first into a "dress code" that allowed anyone dressed in anything to feel comfortable in the house of God. In fact, you would feel more comfortable in jeans and a T-shirt than anything else. If you wore a coat and tie in one of these churches, you would stick out like a sore thumb. The concept was to avoid cultural stumbling blocks that would prevent people from hearing the word. Although the concept may have been motivated for a passion to reach the lost, other thresholds got changed in the process. The standards were lowered. A new threshold was set up and a new doorway.

Reverence was lost in the house of God. Participants came in when they wanted and how they wanted. Some of these churches became more like religious coffee bars than anything else. Try and picture this new threshold church scene. A grossly overweight man, whose been a "Christian" for two decades, comes to church wearing a Budweiser NASCAR tank-top, cotton shorts and flip flops. During the worship service, this carnal man sits down at a table inside the sanctuary of God's house drinking a 64-ounce Big Gulp and munches on a muffin with his feet on a chair in front of him. This man is tragically bound up by many demons but his behavior is allowed because it is perceived as true liberty in Christ.

Liberty in Christ is the ability to completely be free from all influences of the world, the flesh and the devil. The Holy Spirit gives us the liberty to flow in perfect love, grace and truth. We are liberated to be yoked with Jesus. We die to self in order to live to God. The unfortunate man in the illustration above was not in liberty but rather in bondage. His form of independence is actually rebellion, and the church lowers the threshold so he can feel comfortable with his demons.

God says that there is only one door and there is a narrow gate. If we change the door or the gate, we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and we may be shocked at the result. Are you ready to discover the narrow gate? Let's go!

CHAPTER 1 – THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Matthew 4:23

Jesus traveled about teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. His message was authenticated by God's power healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. The gospel of the kingdom brings salvation to those who respond in faith and releases the healing power of God. The Lord wants us to preach the same gospel Jesus preached and walk in the same authenticating power.

The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that God loves fallen sinners and has provided a doorway in Christ through Whom they can come into a right relationship to Him. Jesus died on the cross to take our punishment and make reconciliation to God possible to those who believe. The message of the gospel of the kingdom has two vital parts: Repent and believe.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Jesus Christ preached a message of repentance and called the people to believe in the gospel. **"Repent and believe"** is a pure word seed that leads to a life long pattern for the child of God. We die to self and live to God (Romans 6:11). We put off the old and put on the new (Ephesians 6:22-24). We reject the wine of this world and receive the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). **"Repent and believe"** is the daily theme song of every disciple who longs to become like Jesus.

Repentance also breaks ties to demonic influence. In order to fully follow Jesus, all demons must be expelled from the life of the believer. Demons can get in a person's life through sin and various events of wickedness and abuse. Sin gives demons legal rights to hold the ground the fallen person has given them. Repentance of sin, which includes confession of sin and faith in Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin (I John 1:9), breaks the legal bond demons have on a person. Many, and sometimes all demons will come out immediately upon conversion when a person has experienced true repentance and faith.

However, when salvation messages and altar calls don't include biblical repentance, many demons don't leave their hosts. They cling to their legal right until the sin is confessed and forsaken. Most American churches have a number of demonized "believers", because

they never repented at conversion. In order to follow Jesus, we must repent and forsake all rebellion against Him.

Bear Fruit Worthy of Repentance

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Matthew 3:1-2

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus by preaching repentance and conducting water baptisms. John scolded the Pharisees that a "religious" action was of no value, nor was calling Abraham their father sufficient to save them. John declared that they needed to **"bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8).** The fruits of repentance include godly sorrow, a broken and contrite heart and forsaking sin. **"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).**

Bearing fruit also involves believing in the gospel, the teachings of Jesus, which will result in the character of Jesus being produced over time. Believing in Jesus' teaching includes obeying His word and will by the Holy Spirit.

We must abide in Jesus to bear fruit[4]. We must bear fruit in order to be His disciples and enter into heaven. If a person starts to follow Jesus and does not abide in Him but goes his own way, he will not bear fruit. Jesus said those branches would be cut off, thrown into the fire and burned. This is a reference to the Judgment Day and those "many" who will be sent into Hell for all eternity. They were attached to the vine at one point and then were cut off because they did not abide in Christ nor produce fruit.

We are not saved by bearing fruit, but fruit is evidence of being yoked with Jesus. Apart from walking in agreement with Jesus, we can do nothing. We can bear no fruit. By choosing to walk in a living relationship with Jesus (abiding), good fruit will be the natural byproduct. Good fruit is evidence that we are going through the narrow gate.

Jesus teaches us that those who do not bear fruit by abiding in Him are separated from Him and are thrown into everlasting judgment in the lake of fire. Fruit certainly includes the fruit of the Spirit, as listed in Galatians 5:22-23, that includes the character of Jesus Christ: love,

[4] John 15:4-8

joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. While some new believers like the thief on the cross do not live long enough to exhibit much fruit, those who have been in church for many years should show some signs of salvation. They should demonstrate fruits worthy of repentance. If there is no fruit, perhaps they never repented and are like the Pharisees. They think they are saved, because they attend church and have done some good deeds. God sees their true heart condition.

The Heart That Bears Fruit unto Salvation

In the parable of the sower who sows the seeds of the word of God in Matthew 13, Jesus taught us that there are four heart conditions of those who hear the word of God. Only one heart condition produces fruit. Let's examine this parable carefully.

Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Matthew 13:3-9

Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Matthew 13:18-23

According to Jesus' parable, the seed is the word of God, which Jesus sows across the world through His servants. The living seed of God's

word has the potential to bear the fruit contained in the seed. A salvation word is designed to bring forth salvation. A healing word is designed to forth healing and so forth. The condition of our hearts will determine whether or not the seed will bear fruit to the glory of God. Let's look at the four heart conditions Jesus described for us.

1. **THE WORLDLY HEART** - The seed that falls by the roadside is the broad way of the world that leads to destruction. Traveling in the ways of this world hardens the ground of the heart. The more worldly and sinful a person lives the more callous the heart becomes. This individual does not understand the word sown, and Satan quickly dispatches demonic "birds" to snatch the word away, so that it does not penetrate the heart. The hard heart has no chance to bear fruit unto salvation.

2. **THE STONY HEART** - This heart condition is characteristic of a shallow belief, rather than true faith. There is not much soil available in stony hearts, and there is no genuine depth created through repentance and a broken and contrite heart. As the seed springs up quickly with enthusiasm and excitement, there appears to be hope of fruit, but fruit is the last thing produced under proper conditions and nurture. When tribulation, testing or persecution comes, the individual with a stony heart withers away from saving faith and the crop fails.

3. **THE ENTANGLED HEART** - The word is received in this heart along with seeds of the enemy which quickly grow to entangle the precious developments God intends. The pleasures of this life, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word so that it cannot get proper nutrition, sunlight or the water of God's Spirit. This person's heart becomes a tangled up mess of confusion and darkness. No fruit is borne.

4. **THE GOOD HEART** - The word is heard and understood. At salvation, godly sorrow pierces the heart leading to repentance to enable the heart to receive the word. Patiently the individual learns to cultivate the ground of his heart through worship, repentance and obedience. He allows the Spirit to water the seed through devotion to prayer and God's word. He keeps his heart pure and in peace so the maturing tree may bear fruit for the Master gardener. Persevering faith is the tractor that pulls the plow of repentance to deeply cultivate the soil of our hearts.

The true gospel seed of God's word sown into a person's life must find good soil in order to bear the fruit of salvation. Consequently, many

that hear the word of God by human ears do not have the proper heart preparation to receive that word unto the fruit of true salvation.

Most of us have been taught that we are saved by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8,9). While this is true, biblical faith always includes repentance that leads to salvation and separation from the entanglement of previous sins. In all of the years I ministered to men in the inner city, I never met one who did not "believe" in Jesus. They might be unemployed, standing around a burning barrel on a cold winter day with a bottle of alcohol in their hand, having lived a life of uncontrolled sin, but every single one of them I talked to believed in Jesus. Are they all going to heaven? Not likely.

Living in "post-Christian" America, most unchurched people have little understanding of who God is, the Bible, the cross of Jesus Christ or the cost of following Him. At the end of one service, if a person is encouraged to slip up his hand or "look up here so we can agree with you in prayer to receive Jesus", what exactly happens in those encounters? By God's grace some may get saved or later get deeper instruction, but why not preach what Jesus preached to begin with? **"Repent and believe in the gospel"(Mark 1:15b).**

If we water down the truth of God's word to persuade people to "receive Jesus" quietly without repentance or commitment, we should not expect their hearts to be sufficiently prepared to receive the word implanted on good soil. If we avoid preaching repentance as part of the gospel, we may be preaching a false gospel and give false assurance of salvation when the listener did not experience true salvation.

Paul never gave his converts assurance of salvation because they prayed a simple prayer. Rather he instructed the Philippians to **"work out their salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12b,13).** Paul declares a partnership with God, who comes into the believer to give the grace and will to accomplish the goal of bearing fruit. The believer is responsible to partner with God to work out their salvation.

The biblical declaration of salvation is given as a living seed gift to the heart of those who believe in Christ. We must cultivate the growth of this living gift through repentance and faith, as a lifestyle, until we bear fruit. God gives the free gift of salvation as a living seed, and we partner with Him to facilitate fruit. Assurance of salvation must be based on bearing fruit or observing the evidence of God's working Christ-like character in the heart of the convert. We do not earn

salvation by works, but we do enable God's seed gift to bear life-giving fruit by cooperating with God.

True Repentance Leads to Salvation

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. II Corinthians 7:10

We can all earnestly pray that God would grant us godly sorrow over our sins that will lead us to repentance and salvation. Godly sorrow is a mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. When sharing the gospel, I look for indicators of godly sorrow. If a person is distracted and uninterested, that is a good indicator that their heart is not ready to receive the word implanted.

At that point, rather than trying to jam the seed into their hardened heart, we need to love them, and pray for God's convicting pick ax to start breaking up the fallow ground. As we pray earnestly and love a person consistently, most individuals' hearts begin to tenderize to the gospel, and God will give the opportunity to plant the seed of His word. If the soil of their heart is "good" they will receive the word and bear fruit unto salvation.
The reality of their lost condition and hardened heart should motivate us to pray in agony that they might have their hearts softened to receive the word of God that bears fruit.

Justin went forward to receive Christ at a special meeting, much to the delight of family members who prayed for him for years. Unfortunately, a few years later, Justin's lifestyle included regular binges with alcohol and unfaithfulness towards his wife and children. He only rarely attended church, and his heart condition was extremely hard towards the topic of Christ. Attempting to talk to Justin about Jesus raised his defenses and exposed his bitter heart.

I was not present when Justin heard the message and responded, but I know him, and it is quite evident that there is no fruit of salvation in his life. The seed of the gospel did not find good soil in Justin's heart the day he walked forward, and it was choked out by worldly pursuits within a few years. The gospel may have been accurately preached, but the heart condition did not enable God's holy seed to bear fruit. As we understand Jesus' parable of the four soil conditions, we can understand the reason why so many who once started to walk with Jesus fell away. Their heart was unprepared by repentance to be good soil.

For God so Loved the World

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but shall have eternal life" (John 3:16). God loves the lost and wants them to believe in His Son who was given for their eternal salvation. A person is saved by the grace of God through faith, but that faith is evidenced by a lifestyle of obedience to the Lord Jesus including walking in the good works which God has prepared before hand (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The essence of the gospel of the kingdom is that Jesus died and rose again to deliver souls out of the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom of light. The Holy Spirit's job is to then transform the redeemed sinners to advance God's kingdom and to become the bride of Christ forever. The good news is that God is willing and able to transform weak, fallen people into pure, Christ-like vessels who walk like Jesus walked and become covenant partners to reign with Christ.

Jesus preached the demands of His gospel clearly, **"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26,27).** Jesus is teaching on authority relationships in this passage. We must deny, or hate, the authority of our own parents when it contradicts the will of God. The Creator and Lord of all absolutely requires that we submit to His authority above all others. We must die to our self-will to live for Him.

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it". Luke 9:23-24

There are standards to following Jesus and becoming part of His kingdom. The repentant sinner is required to deny self-rule, take up his cross daily and follow Jesus. The daily cross speaks of a daily death to self-rule and selfish pursuits. This is a daily requirement. We are also required to follow Jesus daily by following the Holy Spirit's leadership. If we do not follow the Holy Spirit's government, we are lawless.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor

known Him. Little children let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. I John 3:4-9

John is clearly in agreement with Jesus that lawlessness is a clear sign of the devil being in control and not Jesus. Those in bondage to habitual sin have reason to question their salvation experience. According to Jesus many are heading down the broad way of destruction who think they are going to heaven.

The gospel declares that Jesus delivers us from sin and destroys the works of the devil in our midst. Jesus Christ breaks every bondage and yoke towards sin by the power of His cross and resurrection. Anything less than a daily life of self-death and resurrection life in Christ is no gospel at all. Man-based efforts of trying to be a "Christian" will lead to a Pharisaic, religious pattern of behavior which appears outwardly righteous but inwardly is full of rottenness and sin.

The essence of the gospel is complete deliverance by the cross of Christ from sin. **"You shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).** Jesus has the power to save us from the power of our sin nature now. The gospel is not a certificate of "fire insurance" which we file in our salvation safe and then go on living in Egypt.

We Must Be Holy

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold from you aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (I Peter 1:13-19).

Peter taught the Church to be obedient children by being holy in all their conduct. God absolutely commands His children to be holy. The good news of Jesus Christ is that He can make us to be like Him while we're still on earth if we will believe His word and obey Him.

Salvation Faith Bears the Fruit of Christlikeness

"For we walk by faith and not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). Those who walk by natural sight and outward appearances end up in all manners of sin and unrighteous behavior. True saving faith enables us to believe that we can walk like Jesus walked by the help of the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

Paul knew that the seed of living faith planted in the hearts of new believers needed to bear good fruit. Paul labored in agonizing, travailing prayer that Christ would be formed in his converts. He was never content to have them simply attending church. **"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).** Paul continuously looked for the fruit of Christ-like character in his disciples.

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:28,29 underlining mine). Paul was on a mission to bring every person he ministered to unto full maturity in Christ Jesus. Paul is a model missionary for us today, and we must emulate his efforts.
The word used for striving above is "agonizomai" from which we get the word agony. Why was Paul consumed with agony as he prayed over these believers? Paul deeply loved his converts and wanted to insure that the word of salvation took root and produced fruit. He was in agony until he knew that those whom he loved would truly be saved evidenced by lasting fruit. Paul had already led them to place their faith in Jesus Christ. Then he prayed in agony and travail that they would grow to bear fruit. His goal was to present every man **"perfect in Christ Jesus".** This must be our goal in fruit bearing ministry.

As a great apostle, who received tremendous revelation from God to pen nearly half of the New Testament, Paul understood that salvation faith needed to abide in Christ and bear the fruit of Christ-likeness in order to qualify before God on the Day of Judgment. This is exactly what Jesus taught in John 15. As we understand God's word on salvation, we can understand the heart of Paul when he wrote to the church at Thessalonica.

For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.
I Thessalonians 3:5

Paul and Silas planted a church in Thessalonica. Paul labored to teach those in the synagogue and **"some were persuaded"**, including a number of leading women (see Acts 17:4). The apostolic team quickly began to disciple the new believers. They had only been able to stay in the city for about a month before opposition drove them out and persecution came against Jason and other believers.

Paul understood the parable of the sower and the seeds. Under this kind of persecution, the new believer's faith might fail if it was in shallow rocky soil. Had the Thessalonican hearts been properly prepared to receive the word implanted? Would the persecution Jason and others experienced cause them to fall away from faith in Christ and to fall back into idolatry? The danger was extremely real. It was a matter of eternal life and everlasting death.

Paul wrote that he was concerned that the tempter (Satan) might have tempted the new believers to give up their new beliefs and fall away from true faith. Paul realized all his efforts would have been **"in vain"** if this happened and prayed earnestly and with compassioned agony that their faith would not fail in the day of adversity. This is the apostolic model of preaching the gospel and agonizing in prayer to see the word bear fruit in the hearers. Paul was consumed with concern about his little flock and later sent Timothy to find out if they were standing in faith.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also see you—therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?
I Thessalonians 3:6-10

Paul's burden of prayer could only be relieved by the confirmation that these new converts were standing strong in the Lord. He continued to pray intensely to visit Thessalonica and complete what was lacking in their faith. Since faith comes by hearing the word of

God (Romans 10:17), Paul needed more time to teach God's word to these new converts to complete the seed of salvation faith to endure until the end.

The faith of most Christians is lacking. The shallow faith many cling to in American churches would not endure the kind of persecution Thessalonican believers encountered. Worries and cares of this world cause the sprouting seed of salvation to be choked and not bear fruit in stony heart believers. Fruitless faith is not saving faith. Once Christ is formed in the heart of a believer and faith is deeply rooted in Christ, fruit will be borne, and nothing can derail that believer from holding fast to Jesus until the end.

The person with fruit producing faith cannot possibly "lose their salvation". Those whose temporary belief in God did not produce fruit, never received the word into a heart prepared by repentance that leads to salvation. While they may have acknowledged the word of salvation for some time and participated in numerous Christian activities, those things don't save a person. Salvation is evidenced by a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, walking by faith, bearing lasting fruit and a lifestyle of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. The cross has the power to deliver us from all sinful habits. If we have faith in the cross and follow Jesus as He commands, we will be set free over time. If we continue in habitual sin, we are in unbelief and deny the power of the cross of Jesus.

Obey His Word and Walk as Jesus Walked

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.
1 John 2:1-6

John does not say we have to live in sinless perfection to be saved, but that we only have true assurance of our salvation if we keep His commandments, obey His word and walk just as Jesus walked. God commands us to live holy lives before Him. Many of our hearts have been programmed with a shallow, compromising belief system.

Our minds can rationalize certain passages of scripture and we easily get into deception tolerating sin. Our hearts are darkened as to our true condition, and as we resist the Holy Spirit's conviction, the heart becomes harder. It is common to attend a church in accordance to our own desires or beliefs that allow us to continue to control our own lives and live in a mixture of sin and religious activity. Will this kind of life bear fruit unto salvation?

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. Hebrews 12:14-17 (underlining mine)

The writer of Hebrews stated that if we do not pursue holiness, we will not see the Lord. This relates to the intent of our heart, and not necessarily the full attainment of character. Esau sold his birthright for instant gratification (see Genesis 25:30-34). Our birthright is to walk holy before God with a pure heart and flow His love to a needy world. We must not sell our birthright for the temporary pleasures of sin. We all reap what we sow, and if we sow to the flesh, we will not be able to recover our loss on the Day of Judgment.

We must diligently repent of our sins and cling to God's grace to forgive others that hurt us. If bitterness takes root in the heart, a person can reach a stage like Esau, where all he has is worldly sorrow that will not bring restoration of that which was lost. Worldly sorrow does not produce repentance or salvation.

Jesus Will not Cast a Believer Out

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:37-40

Jesus promised that He would never cast out those whom the Father gives to Him. The Father gives to Jesus those who believe in Him. Those who believe in Jesus have faith in His word in the good soil of their hearts so that the word bears fruit unto life-changing salvation. Those who do not have faith in the cross of Jesus to deliver them from sin's power and who maintain a lifestyle of lawless rebellion have run from the hand of Jesus.

If they ever were in Jesus' hand, which is doubtful, He still did not cast them out. They ran in rebellion from Him. The Lord does not make anyone follow Him or go through the narrow gate. He longs to gather lost souls into His kingdom, but He always requires that they repent first and then believe in the gospel of His kingdom.

CHAPTER 2 – ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
Matthew 7:13,14

Jesus released His exhortation to enter by the narrow gate in the famous Sermon on the Mount. In the response to multitudes of Jews who followed Jesus to see miracles, Jesus went up on a mountain top and His disciples came to Him (see Matthew 5:1). There were many religious Jews who made the effort to climb a mountain to hear Jesus' teaching. They were astonished at what they heard. Jesus taught with anointed authority.

It is vital that we recognize the context of Jesus' message to understand its application for today. Jesus was talking to a profoundly religious public who made a strenuous effort to hear Him teach. The Jews were instructed in the Old Testament scriptures from early childhood. They memorized many passages from the Bible and attended God ordained festivals that pointed to the Messiah. Jesus spoke the narrow gate truth to the nation God had formed and called apart. They had the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets.

Jesus told them that only a few would find the way of true life. He inferred that most of them would go the broad way into destruction. History backs up Jesus' teaching. Most of the first-century Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. They thought they were going into eternal salvation, but they were perilously deceived.

Today, Jesus speaks the same message to earnest church attenders who believe they are God's people. Jesus' word is truth and still applies today. Jesus declared that we must enter by the narrow gate. Entering the narrow gate is essential to true salvation and few find that way. There are many churches that teach a way of salvation that appears to "widen the gate" significantly. Most altar calls, if given at all, simply talk about "receiving Jesus". Most never mention the need to repent. This omits the repentance half of Jesus' message.

Our society is proliferated with marketing campaigns that offer a free gift. All one needs to do to receive that gift is to follow certain instructions. The motivation behind the "free gift" offer is usually to get the consumer in position to be sold something he or she doesn't really want. We have been offered "free gifts" if we would just go and see a certain time-share condominium. They put all kinds of pressure

on us later to buy into the plan. Has eternal life with Jesus become a "free gift" that we can receive without obligation? Is there no greater effort required beyond simply "receiving" to enter through the narrow gate?

Many "Christians" Practice Lawlessness and Will Not Enter In

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus tells us that many are calling Him Lord, but only those who do the will of the Father shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Does this mean that in order to be saved, we actually have to obey the will of God? Jesus consistently taught that we must obey God's will to be in His kingdom. Many teachers imply that this obedience is a "work" and is not needed for salvation. Jesus made it very plain. He said that many would stand before Him on that day, undoubtedly the Judgment Day, and would have to depart from Him. Why? Because they did not obey His will!

According to Jesus, there are **"many"** that prophesy and teach in His name that will not enter into heaven. There are **"many"** who cast out demons in His name that will be turned away. There are **"many"** who have done many wonders in His name that will be lost for all eternity. The magnitude of this truth should shake and awaken us. The reason these gifted people fail to enter in through the narrow gate is that they practice lawlessness. People who walk in prophetic, deliverance and power "anointings" are especially susceptible to this deception according to Jesus. Walking in power doesn't save you, walking in a submissive relationship to Jesus does!

Lawlessness is simply being ungoverned by the Holy Spirit and the word of God. The Lord's narrow gate is that we would do the will of the Father in perfect agreement with the Holy Spirit at all times. Some teachers say that this is legalism. Jesus said that this is the narrow gate and few are they who enter into it.

Take His Yoke and Walk With Him

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

The illustration of a yoke makes this walk of agreement plain and simple. Jesus calls us to walk yoked with Him. When oxen were yoked together for work, a sturdy wooden beam contoured to their necks and shoulders connected them. Ropes and leather straps held the oxen in place side by side so that they could pull a load in partnership together.

The neck is a picture of the human will and shoulders represent government. Our will must be yoked to His will, and we must submit to the government that is upon His shoulders (see Isaiah 9:6). Jesus always lived by His prayer, **"not My will, but Yours be done"** (Luke 22:42). Jesus lived to do the will of the Father. We enter through the narrow gate by choosing the same pathway.

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed" (Amos 3:3)? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Amos asked an important question. Like oxen yoked together, we must be yoked by agreement with Jesus to walk with Him. We know that Jesus never changes. To walk with Him, we must change. We must choose to deny ourselves, take up our cross (yoke) and get into agreement with Him (follow Him).

The narrow gate is simply a lifestyle of learning to agree with Jesus' life, His word, His Spirit and His will. The process of coming into greater agreement with Jesus is called "sanctification" and it can take many years. This process can be severely delayed by poor teaching, rebellion and stubbornness. The benefits of walking in agreement with Jesus are extraordinary and everlasting. The best thing any believer can ever do is walk in perfect agreement with Jesus at all times.

Choosing the narrow gate puts you on the pathway to mature sonship so that you can walk in the inheritance of God, which includes His extraordinary power. The Holy Spirit wants to equip you to grow up and achieve your destiny bearing great fruit for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The narrow gate is the only pathway to mature sonship and few reach that destiny.

Lord, Are There few who are Saved?

And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able". Luke 13:22-24

Jesus' teaching is simple yet astounding. Many will seek to enter through the narrow gate and will not be able. Why are they not able? Are they too fat? Is the entry price to great? Why is it so difficult for those who seek to enter through the narrow gate to get through?

To enter through the narrow gate requires that a person completely abandons "self-will" and completely chooses God's will revealed primarily in the word of God by the Holy Spirit. We must allow the Spirit to crucify our flesh and its passions daily and embrace a life of worship and obedience to God. We must become mature and holy for He is holy. The narrow gate is completely intolerant of rebellion, stubbornness and all forms of fleshly idolatry.

Sinful man does not like the narrow gate that Jesus taught. Teachers through the ages have made up doctrines, with the help of demons, to make the gate nice and broad and wide so that everyone who prays a prayer, slips up their hand and receives Jesus can go to heaven. God is never going to change the standard of His narrow gate to allow man, whom He loves dearly, to enter in. **The narrow gate is seen in the heart attitudes exhibited in the life of Jesus on earth.** That gate will never change, ever!

We enter into the pathway of salvation when we repent of our sins and believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9,10). This is not a one-time event but rather a pathway of life that goes on through the cycle of repenting and believing and growing in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ over time.

Another reason few people enter through the narrow gate is because of unhealed woundedness from childhood experiences. All of us were raised by imperfect parents. Some parents were outright abusive and devilish. The more traumatic and abusive our past was, the more difficult it can be to believe God's love for us. The good news is that those who are forgiven much love much. God's love is able and willing to heal every wounded heart. In order to go through the narrow gate, one must leave all bitterness and unforgivenss at the cross of Jesus who forgives us. To experience His forgiveness, we must forgive. Those who are deeply bound up by woundedness need both healing and deliverance from demonic forces so they can make

progress through the narrow gate. God can and will do this for those who call upon His name in faith.

The New Heart has been Given

Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! Deuteronomy 5:29-30

After God gave the Law to Moses, He declared that He wished His people had a heart in them that would fear Him and always keep all His commandments. God prophesied His desire to Moses and looked toward the day when His Son would shed His blood to redeem man from sin and send the Holy Spirit to produce a new heart in His people. The new heart is given just as God said, **"that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments".**

The new heart is given so that we have the capacity to fear God and keep all of His commandments. God absolutely intends for His children to be perfectly obedient to all His commandments and gives us the internal means to accomplish this by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our regenerated spirits.

The Old Covenant Law did not provide internal transformation by giving the faithful a new heart or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jeremiah understood that the old heart was deceptive and fallen and needed to be motivated by the prospect of blessings or punishments (see Jeremiah 17:9). The Law provided promises of blessings for those who obeyed. The Law pronounced curses and punishments for those who disobeyed.

Under the law, people of faith were primarily motivated by the prospect of blessings or curses. Under the law, if the people gave 10% of their income into the storehouse of God, He promised the windows of heaven would open and that they would be greatly blessed. If they did not give 10% of their income unto God, they would be under a curse and the devourer would be loosed against them (see Malachi 3).

Since Christ has fulfilled the law and redeemed us from every curse under the law (Galatians 3:13), mature sons give based on a relationship with the Holy Spirit who gives the discernment and guidance to give. Giving 10% of our income is a tutor of the Law until we mature to the point where we can give by relationship with the Holy Spirit.

God used the Law to form a nation through which He could give His word and send His Son. The Law was a tutor to lead the people of God to realize their need for a Savior. The Law exposes the fallen heart's inability to obey God. The Law exposes our fallen, rebellious nature that runs from God and hates to submit to the Holy Spirit. God's intent all along has been to give people a heart change so that they could fully obey Him from within. At Pentecost, this became possible as the Holy Spirit came to live inside believers.

The New Law set in the Heart by the Holy Spirit

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, including the passage on the narrow gate, called for a transition out of the external Law into the new, internal standards or the heart issues. Under the Old Covenant, it was a sin to commit adultery. Under the New Covenant, it is a sin to even have lust in the heart (see Matthew 5:27,28). The Holy Spirit, Who comes into the reborn believer, sets the new "law" or government in the heart. God promised to send His Spirit and produce a new heart in His people in the Old Testament days.

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <u>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you</u>; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Ezekiel 36:25-27 (underlining mine)

We notice that the Spirit is put within us to cause us to walk in God's statutes and that we will keep His judgments. Simply stated, we are given the Holy Spirit so that we can obey the Lord in all matters. God Himself comes inside the redeemed believer both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). It is God's good pleasure that we walk just as Jesus walked (I John 2:6).

Since God gives us a new heart and places the power of the Spirit within us so that we can walk as Jesus walked, it is unbelief and disobedience not to walk as Jesus walked. ***Learning to walk as Jesus walked in perfect love and submission to the Father and the Spirit is the narrow gate that leads to life.***

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2-3

We are not under the old Law, but we are not to be "lawless" either. The Holy Spirit is placed in our hearts as the **"law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"**. Most Christians who argue that we are "not under the Law" don't even understand the essence of the Law. Jesus made it extremely clear.

Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus summed up the intent of the Law of God in this passage. God's intent is that we love Him with everything in us and that we love people. The entire law is summed up in the commandments to love. God is love and wants our hearts to be filled with His love. This can only happen as we love Him and love others. Jesus gave a new commandment and told us to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34). God calls Christians to live a lifestyle of sacrificial love and places His Spirit in us to empower us to do it.

The Pharisees were full of lawlessness. They did not love God with all their hearts and they did not love people. The Son of God fulfilled the Law by loving the Father with all His heart and loving people perfectly and laying down His life for them. We are now given the capacity by faith in Christ Jesus to walk in perfect love just as He did. This is the essence of the law of the Holy Spirit. If we disobey the Holy Spirit, we start down the pathway of lawlessness and our love will grow cold.

The Holy Spirit directed my wife and I to take our children every Sunday to a church in Barstow, California, 84 miles from our home. We've been doing this for over four years. The Holy Spirit has not given us the leading to move closer to Barstow nor has He led us to attend churches that are much closer to our home. As we walk with the Lord, we are doing His will and obeying the law written in our hearts.

It would be lawless and sinful for us to decide to disobey the leading of the Holy Spirit simply because we didn't like to drive that far. All sons of God are led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). He leads His children to attend and participate in many different churches. We all must simply be faithful to His leading. If we don't obey the Holy Spirit, we are ungoverned by Him and become lawless (without the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus leading us).

Sons of God through Faith

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26

True believers in Jesus Christ are adopted sons of God. This is a positional relationship of great grace that applies to both genders of believers. God has destined us to become part of His everlasting family as we walk by faith in Jesus. God wants to have as many sons as there are stars in the sky. God wants billions of sons!

Jesus was and is the only begotten Son of God who has existed in all eternity at the side of His Father along with the Holy Spirit. The holy seed of Jesus' everlasting life was placed into Mary by the Holy Spirit and He became a man-God. Jesus forever lives with a glorified human body and is fully God.

Adam was formed from the earth as a son of God (see Luke 3:38) but fell into transgression and lost his authority and dominion rights as a son. Jesus came and perfectly obeyed the will of God at all times and gave His life so that we could become adopted sons of God through faith in Him. Adopted sons are given the same sonship rights as Jesus had on earth.

Jesus has taken the position as the head and we are His body. In order for us to function properly as His body, we must get into agreement and alignment with the Head, Jesus Christ. To be in proper order, we must abide in Him and obey the Holy Spirit. Five-fold ministers are to equip the saints to measure up to the standard of Christ (see Ephesians 4:11-16).

The process of measuring up to the standard of Christ is the pathway of the narrow gate. It begins by repenting of self-rule and choosing to believe in Jesus as your new ruler. It is amazingly simple. It is a conversion experience. You convert your heart focus away from selfish idols and place your heart focus on loving Jesus with all your heart. There is no room in mature kingdom living for heart affections apart from Christ.

Jesus completely lived His life to please His Father and complete His will. This is the **intent** we must agree to set our hearts toward. It will take some time to **attain** maturity, but the Holy Spirit is given as the anointing who teaches us how to conform to the image of Christ in all things (I John 2:27).

Anyone who rejects the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit is rejecting the Father and the Son and begins to practice lawlessness. All kinds of religious performance, activities and programs may take place, but if a person is not walking in and by the Holy Spirit, Jesus does not know them as part of His body.

The Holy Spirit is given the charge to bring the body of Jesus Christ into maturity as sons. As this happens with individuals, they will be anointed to equip others to reach maturity as well. Mature sons access the inheritance of God, which is the powerful flow of God's life as a river of living water to bring life wherever it goes.

Those who mature in sonship will grow to walk in tremendous authority and power. Every mature member of the body will play a vital role in the release of God's grace to touch this fallen world with His light. Mature sons access divine power to walk holy, bear fruit and behave like Jesus. They will also act like Jesus in divine power.

Jesus promised us that those who believed in Him would do the works that He did and greater works (see John 12:12-14). We are going to walk in the works of Jesus as we grow up into agreement and alignment with Him as Head.

CHAPTER 3 - DIFFICULT IS THE WAY

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and <u>difficult</u> is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14 (underlining mine)

Jesus consistently preached that the gate is narrow and the way difficult which leads to life. The Greek word for difficult is "thlibo (thlee'-bo)" which means "to crowd (literally or figuratively)". Picture the difficulty of trying to press through a large crowd of people heading in the opposite direction. Thlibo is translated "afflict, narrow, throng, suffer tribulation, crush and hard pressed". Thlibo is akin to the word "tribos" which means "to rub" as seen in a rut or worn track that has become a pathway. The word implies that we will experience tremendous difficulties and opposition as we follow Jesus. The Lord warns that we will be persecuted and hard pressed to go through this way unto life.

The Greek word "thlipsis (thlip,-sis)", which comes from the root word "thlibo" is used to denote "pressure (literally or figuratively)" and is translated "afflicted, affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution,

tribulation and trouble". As we study these two words throughout the New Testament and examine the lives of Jesus and His early disciples, it is evident that Jesus meant to teach us that we would have to go through suffering and trials of persecution to enter through the narrow gate. Let's look closely at the use of these two similar words, "thlibo and thlipsis". Whenever they appear, I will underline them in the text.

But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when <u>tribulation</u> or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Matthew 13:20,21 (underlining mine).

Jesus taught that tribulation (difficulty) will come to believers because of the word of God. Those whose hearts are not deeply cultivated to receive the word implanted will fall away under this persecution. Note that Jesus says, "when tribulation or persecution arises". Jesus does not say, "if" or "perhaps", but "when". Tribulation and persecution are guaranteed to all who seek to live godly in Christ Jesus. **"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12).**

Jesus taught us there would come a day of great difficulty for believers. **"Then they will deliver you up to <u>tribulation</u> and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9 - underlining mine).** Jesus' word is truth and He wants to prepare us to go through seasons of tribulation. **"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world <u>you will have tribulation</u>; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 underlining mine).** We may or may not go through the Great Tribulation time period, but Jesus said that entering through the narrow gate was difficult, that is, filled with tribulation.

The word difficult means "hard to do or achieve". Tribulation means "great affliction, trial, or distress: suffering" and comes from the Latin word meaning "to press". Paul talked about being hard pressed, which is the same Greek word "thlibo" that Jesus used to define the narrow gate. **"We are <u>hard pressed</u> on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (II Corinthians 4:8-10 underlining mine).**

All of the early apostles of Jesus were martyred except John. Paul went through great suffering and persecution as he pressed through the narrow gate to obey the Holy Spirit's call on His life. Paul taught his disciples that the way of following Jesus was difficult and that entrance into the kingdom of God included "much tribulation".

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through <u>much tribulation</u> enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22 underlining mine). Paul's teaching is in perfecting agreement with Jesus' teaching. Paul understood that we must go through intense struggle to enter into the kingdom of God, to go through the narrow gate.

Paul expected difficulty because the Holy Spirit told him to expect it. **"Except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me" (Acts 20:23).** There is great persecution and tribulation in many parts of the world today, and believers suffer every day and are continuously being oppressed, afflicted, tortured, and martyred. We should not expect to get into the kingdom of God without trials and sufferings. If we don't have any tribulation, we are not pressing into the kingdom of God, we may even be walking in delusion!

God Comforts us in our Difficulties

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our <u>tribulation</u>, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any <u>trouble</u>, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are <u>afflicted</u>, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our <u>trouble</u> which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. II Corinthians 1:3-8 (underlining mine)

Paul found it difficult to walk through the narrow gate. He experienced great trouble to the point that he despaired of life. This trouble included being hungry, thirsty, beaten and homeless. Paul

was reviled and persecuted. He was treated as the trash of the earth (see I Corinthians 4:11-13). Paul received thirty-nine lashes from a Jewish whip five different times. He was frequently in prison and threatened with death often. Paul was beaten with rods three times, stoned with rocks once and shipwrecked three times. He experienced perils and trials everywhere he traveled and was weary. Paul spent many nights in sleeplessness, in chains and in great physical pain (see II Corinthians 11:23-31).

The religious crowd, like Job's friends, would say that Paul was being cursed by God because he was suffering, homeless or without money. Paul was pressing through the narrow gate. He was yoked with Jesus and obeying the Holy Spirit. Paul modeled the mature life of God's servants and walked in the transformation power of God.

Paul was also burdened by the great compassion he had for his disciples to walk holy with Jesus. He was not content for them to fall away or live a lukewarm life. Paul agonized in prayer over his converts as part of the difficulty of following the narrow way. **"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you" (II Corinthians 2:4 underlining mine).**

Paul recognized that affliction was part of the pathway of following Jesus and that even those hardships were working Christ-like character in his heart. **"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17).** The normal Christian life will include great trials and difficulties. This is not a sign of God's displeasure but rather a reality of pressing through demonic resistance to obey the Holy Spirit.

That no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. (I Thessalonians 3:3-5 underlining mine)

In city after city and church after church, Paul taught new converts that they would suffer tribulation. Paul taught that the way through would be difficult, just as Jesus taught. Genuine saving faith must overcome the trials of intense difficulties. Converts lost jobs, were rejected by families and were hated by religious leaders and city

officials. Many were killed or fed to lions and some were made human torches in Nero's garden. History is filled with stories of the tribulation of the saints.

John Endured Tribulation

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in <u>tribulation</u>, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:9 (underlining mine)

Next to Jesus, John was one of the most loving men who ever lived. His heart was filled with the compassion of Jesus. He was a true, intimate worshipper and a gentle man. Yet John was persecuted greatly and ended up exiled as a prisoner in his old age on the island of Patmos. This penal colony was no picnic. It was a miracle that John could survive. He probably lived in a cave in the rocks. It was here that God revealed His great end time revelation, which John recorded. God releases some of the greatest revelation to His saints who are in great difficulty.

John saw a great multitude of every nation, tribe and tongue who will come out of the Great Tribulation (see Revelation 7:14). We may not be the ones who live during the Great Tribulation, but many saints will have to endure great suffering in the last days. The gospel that is being preached and taught in most American churches is not preparing the people to suffer at all, even in minor tribulation.

The Old Testament bears witness that those who walked by faith before Jesus came had to endure great oppression. **"Still others had trials of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, <u>afflicted</u>, tormented--of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Hebrews 11:36-40 underlining mine).**

Jesus said the way was difficult that leads to life and few are they who find it. Jesus told the truth. We must embrace His word and abandon ourselves to follow Him at all costs. For those who overcome, there is a great crown of life and everlasting joy.

Not every disciple of Jesus will be called to go through the level of tribulation Paul and the early apostles had to endure. But all true disciples will experience tribulation to some degree as they follow the Holy Spirit. The enemy opposes the kingdom of God and wars against those who walk by the anointing. If you never have opposition in your life of following Jesus, you aren't walking by the Spirit.

During the eleven years I lived in St. Louis as a missionary to the poor on the Northside, I experienced continuous persecution. My life was threatened nearly every week during those hard years of trying to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus. I was intimidated and afraid on numerous occasions. I wish I could testify that I was always bold and strong, but I was not. The Lord helped me to have the courage to keep going when the opposition was so intense. It simply is not easy to follow the Holy Spirit, but it is extremely rewarding even unto eternity. I encourage you with all my heart to follow the Holy Spirit no matter how difficult His call on your life is. Go through the narrow gate!

CHAPTER 4 – ENTER THROUGH THE DOOR

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:7-10

Jesus Himself is the door. A Bible tract is not the door. A doctrine is not the door. A mental knowledge of Jesus is not the door. The Man Christ Jesus, the living ruling King of Kings, is the door.

We don't go through the door by saying certain words, we go through by coming into submission to Jesus. We must come into a proper relationship to Jesus. Salvation is walking in agreement with Jesus and not about holding to a religious doctrine.

It does not need to take a long time for a person to understand salvation and go through the door, but they will need to repent of sin and believe in Jesus. In repenting, they are choosing to die to self-rule, and in believing, they are choosing to let Christ rule their lives.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. John 10:1-6

Jesus' disciples did not understand his teaching about the door and neither have we. A personal relationship with Jesus is the only way into the kingdom of God. Anyone who develops a different standard of measure than Jesus is developing another door. Or the religious person may try to climb over a wall into the church. That person is a thief and a robber according to Jesus.

Jesus leads His sheep by voice. They recognize His voice and will not follow a stranger. Sheep have an uncanny ability to hear and follow

the voice of their shepherd. As God's people, we must learn to clearly discern the voice of our good Shepherd. Those who enter through the narrow gate learn to hear His voice. The narrow gate and the door are similar illustrations of the same truth.

Jesus made it plain. His sheep follow His voice. He knows them and they know Him. If we are following our own voice or other voices we follow the stranger and are led astray. Those who are led astray by other voices do not know the voice of Jesus.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. John 10:11-16

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. Unfortunately, there are many hirelings in the Church who serve for personal gain. They do not stand against the devilish wolves that rip families apart and destroy the people with sickness and disease. They do not deliver the people from their sinful bondages or their demonic tormentors. They run during the hard times because they do not really care about the sheep.

As an urban missionary for over two decades, I talked with many pastors. One young pastor ministered two blocks from our ministry center, which was located in an impoverished neighborhood in North St. Louis. Our ministry primarily reached out to people within five blocks of our homes, which were located in the midst of the most violent area of our city. The denominational church this young pastor served had a wonderful gym that was virtually never used. It was attached to a school building which once housed a private Christian school when the church flourished fifty years prior.

Since we ministered to scores of youth from the neighborhood, we proposed to rent the gym for some recreational activities. We were also praying about starting a Christian school. We were interested in buying the building or renting it. The young pastor I talked with was simply a "hired gun". He had no real authority in this church. He told

me that his only duties were to preach sermons, visit the sick and perform funerals. He would have liked to do a wedding or two, but there were no young people left in the church. Because all his people were Anglos who drove to get to the church located in an African American community, they hired a policeman to watch over the cars during the Sunday morning service. During the rest of the week, the facilities were almost always vacant.

The church apparently had major endowments from wealthy members who had passed on and did not need or really want to rent their facilities to inner-city folks. Like most denominational pastors, this man probably didn't last more than three or four years at that location. I never actually saw the man again, although I lived and ministered nearby for several more years. God eventually enabled us to purchase and renovate the old Northside YMCA building in 1986.

The Lord provided so that we could have a beautiful gymnasium and classrooms for a school, Bible studies and space for many other outreach ministries including a church plant. Inner-city children, teens and adults are still using that facility almost daily. I imagine that the other gym and school is still vacant most of the time.

My point in relating this story is that a once vibrant church became a lifeless institution that simply hired a "pastor" to do what they wanted him to do. They had no outreach in the needy neighborhood and were unwilling to support us in our outreach to their neighbors. They may have once followed the Good Shepherd but started listening to other voices and ended up following a stranger. The danger is great that we could do the same if we don't passionately love Jesus and follow His voice at all times.

Solomon's Temple Door

For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood; the lintel and doorposts were one-fifth of the wall. The two doors were of olive wood; and he carved on them figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. So for the door of the sanctuary he also made doorposts of olive wood, one-fourth of the wall. And the two doors were of cypress wood; two panels comprised one folding door, and two panels comprised the other folding door. Then he carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers on them, and overlaid them with gold applied evenly on the carved work. 1 Kings 6:31-35

There is a great deal of prophetic teaching in the door of Solomon's temple. What I have discovered, I will share with you so that you can see Jesus pictured as the door into the presence of God.

The olive wood is a picture of the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus provides the grace so that we can enter into the presence of the Lord undefiled by the stains of sin. Olives provide the oil for the temple lamps and are a picture of the illumination of the Holy Spirit that is needed to see our way into God's presence.

The temple door is covered with gold, which is a picture of the divine life of Jesus Christ. The wood is also picture of His humanity. The gold represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit that must be on our humanity to enable us to enter into His presence. We can only truly worship in spirit and in truth. Without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, the anointing, we cannot enter the door.

The cherubim carved on the temple doors speak to us of the holy angels of God who guard the entrance into His presence. **"So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24).** Adam and Eve were not capable of entering back into the Garden of Eden in their fallen condition.

We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and can enter in through the true door. However, we must pass by the cherubim with the flaming sword. The word of God is sharper than any two edged sword and is a fire to convict us of our sin (Hebrews 4:12). As we begin to enter through the true door in deeper worship, we often experience the conviction of sin. It is as if the angel of the Lord cries "Halt" and points his flaming sword at an area of uncrucified flesh. As we once again get into agreement with the Spirit of God, we repent and confess our sin before the Lord and forsake it. Then we are allowed into His presence in a deeper way.

If we maintain our sin after being convicted by the Holy Spirit's fire, we may think we are going in, but we only deceive ourselves. Lawless individuals are not going through the door with the cherubim guarding the way. They are going through a man made door that leads to destruction. If we do not love and forgive our brothers and sisters in Christ, we certainly get stuck outside the door.

Cherubim were also over the mercy seat of God hovering with their wings. I believe they are the same as the seraphim Isaiah and John saw crying, **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty"** (see

Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). God's throne room presence is the holy of holies. We cannot enter into His presence any way we like. His presence is permeated by the endless declaration of His perfect holiness. Those who would come in and experience His magnificent presence will come in by the door of Christ or not at all.

This means that Jesus Himself determines who goes through or not. To go through in prayer to the throne room of God's revelation presence is not as easy as praying a quick prayer. God does honor all manners of sincere prayer in the name of Jesus, but there is a place we can enter into the incredible presence of God where, by spirit, we speak face to face with Him and our prayers are answered and we receive pure revelation. This place is not as easy to find as one would think!

Those who believe in cheap grace religious nonsense do not enter that place. Those who delight in the fear of the Lord and who tremble at His glorious presence enter that place. Those who embrace the flaming angel's sword and allow the Spirit to cut out flesh and soulish sin access that secret place. Those who embrace God's fiery dealings longing to be a pure and spotless bride for Jesus find entrance to the holy tabernacle in heaven.

Palm Trees were carved on the door of the temple. Solomon was inspired by the Holy Spirit to design those doors. Palm trees are a picture of the doorway from the natural to the spiritual realm. The deep roots of palm trees speak of the humanity of Jesus. The ability to bend in the wind speaks of the ability of Jesus to flow with the Holy Spirit in all things.

The branches at the top represent the divine, victorious life where all good fruit is borne by the wind of the Spirit. Palm trees represent the righteous triumph at the end of the age by victorious saints who have conformed to the image of Jesus (see Revelation 9:7).

The Feast of Tabernacles included palm branches, a sign that Jesus will tabernacle among us and help us overcome. God wants to tabernacle in our hearts since we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Palm branches were waved at Jesus' triumphal entry. They are a sign of the entrance of the King into the land. Palm trees on the temple doors also represent that God flows the wind of His Spirit through human vessels, covered with the anointing of gold. This door represents an entry point from the natural to the spiritual realm.

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. Judges 4:4-5

The palm tree also represents the prophetic voice of the Holy Spirit. Deborah sat under a palm tree as a prophetic intercessor between heaven and earth. She was a door through which God released the wind of His voice. Deborah sat at a spiritual gate and judged tribes because of her calling and relationship with God.

Deborah was a Judge of Israel, and she represents the last day five-fold prophetic warrior bride. She represents the prophetic voice of judges and women in ministry including five-fold offices. The name Deborah means, "Eloquent; an orator; bee; to speak." She represents the voice of God we hear in the door as Moses did.

Deborah's husband was named Lapidoth, which means, "Torches, having eyes of fire; enlightened; lighting flashes". Lapidoth is picture of the heavenly bridegroom with eyes a flame of fire with passionate, zealous desire for His prophetic warrior bride.

Deborah dwelt between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. Ramah means, "High place dedicated to idols" and represents the pride and vanity of man. Bethel means, "The house of God." God placed a powerful prophetic picture in Deborah who judged Israel under a palm tree. She was able to discern between man's vanity and the house of God. She could see the standard of God's holiness and the folly of man's sin.

Deborah was able to move in the natural and supernatural realms. The palm tree pictures the ability to be in both realms at the same time and be victorious. Deborah didn't just sit under the tree, she went to war and conquered the evil Canaanite king Jabin and his wicked general Sisera. These wicked men represent forces that operate by human wisdom and soul power that must be overcome by living by the prophetic voice of God.

Deborah sat under a palm tree in the "mountains of Ephraim". Ephraim was Joseph's youngest son born during the time of bountiful harvest. Ephraim represents the second-generation prophets blessed of God. Ephraim means, "Two fold increase; very fruitful; doubly fruitful." Ephraim was blessed to receive a double portion of Joseph's blessing, the true prophet of God who kept his heart in mercy after being rejected by his brothers.

The palm tree is a picture of ascending into the mountain of Zion to experience revelation from God while still rooted in the practical realities of natural realm living. You will notice that palm trees are found throughout the temple and also picture the warm climate of God's love by the seashore. God wants His love to go out to the sea of humanity with warmth and triumph so that He can tabernacle among them.

Open flowers were also carved on the temple doors and were covered with gold. Flowers speak to us of the beauty of God. They are warm and inviting that we may come and experience the fragrance of Christ on the mountain of spices. Flowers invite us to experience His pleasures and the romance of His perfect love.

The flowers were opened, which speaks to us of maturity and fullness. Flowers open in the warm sunshine. The temple of God is filled with perfect light and everlasting lovingkindness. While the temple must be entered with reverence, God's warmth and delight are there as well.

God wants us to come into His presence and experience the beauty of His holiness and perfect love. There are heavenly fragrances and beauties that will captivate our heart affections and transform us into the image of Jesus as we behold Him.

Flowers grow out of the dirt speaking once again of the humanity of Jesus and the beautiful life He gives to those who put their faith in Him. No matter how much dirt we have been through, God's grace and love can cause us to become open flowers that we might manifest the fragrance of Christ in this fallen world (II Corinthians 2:14,15).

Cherubim, palm trees and open flowers carved on olive wood covered with gold made up the doors of the temple. The temple doors were magnificent pictures communicating the life of Jesus and our life in Him. Doorkeepers guarded these doors and only the priests and kings of God, properly chosen and clothed could enter in to the holiest places. We are called to be priests and kings unto our God and by faith in Jesus, have opportunity to access the holy presence of the great King.

CHAPTER 5 – THE INHERITANCE OF GOD

Responding in faith to the gospel of the kingdom yokes an individual to walk in agreement with Jesus. We enter through the narrow gate by denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily and following Jesus. We walk in relationship to Jesus, the door, by hearing and following His voice. Repenting and believing become a lifestyle as we change to become more like Jesus. This pathway leads us to the place where we can walk in the inheritance of God.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:11-23 (underlining mine)

Entering through the narrow gate is the only way we can gain access to the extraordinary inheritance we have in Christ. The narrow gate establishes a direct pathway to maturity. Only mature sons of God through faith in Christ will be able to walk in the fruit, gifts, authority and power of the Holy Spirit at the level God intends. While our eternal inheritance is to be with the Lord forever and enjoy everlasting blessings (I Peter 1:4), God wants us to mature in Christ

and walk in the authority and power of our inheritance available now so that we can exercise righteous, benevolent dominion on earth.

Once genuinely converted by faith in the gospel of the kingdom, the Holy Spirit seals our hearts as a guarantee that we will receive everlasting blessings. Paul prays that the eyes of the Ephesians would be opened to know the reality of the **"riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"**. We need our eyes opened in revelation knowledge so that we will press into full maturity and "download" large portions of our inheritance now.

God established laws of inheritance in the Old Testament as a type and shadow to teach us of the marvelous grace He has in store for true believers. An inheritance was the passing down of the wealth and land of a deceased person to his children. The eldest son usually received a double portion of the wealth. He also usually received the land and the "birthright" to have authority over all that the deceased father owned. He was responsible to care for his mother and the entire household. Various gifts were usually given to the other surviving children.

All of the promises God made to the father are part of the inheritance that is passed down to the son who had the "birthright", usually the first born. The first born son received the promises given to the father unless God designated the second born to receive the inheritance as in the case of Jacob over Esau or Ephraim over Manasseh.

Abraham believed the promises of God to him that he would receive God's blessings. The blessings included a son, land, a great nation, to become the father of many nations and that all the nations in the world would be blessed through his seed which points to Christ (see Genesis 12:1-3; 17:5ff). All the nations of the world would be blessed because Abraham obeyed the voice of God to offer up his son Isaac by faith (Genesis 22:1-20).

The Blessings of Abraham

Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son-- blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your

descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." Genesis 22:15-19

By an act of faith, Abraham believed God's promises and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). This text is a key verse Paul uses in the book of Romans to argue for justification by faith (see Romans 4:3ff). Justification means to become in a right relationship with God through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Genuine faith is always tested and tried by fiery trials (I Peter 1:6,7).

Abraham's faith was severely tested when he was called upon to offer Isaac on the altar as a sacrifice (see Genesis 22). Abraham did not know that he was called to be an example of the Father offering up His Son Jesus on Calvary. Abraham simply obeyed God's voice. Because Abraham acted on God's voice in total obedience, God made a great promise, stated above, that is known as the blessing of Abraham.

Picture God Himself speaking over you and your family saying, **"Blessing, I will bless you!"** There can be no greater grace than to have Almighty God speak His absolute favor of blessing over us. That pronounced blessing is part of the inheritance that was passed down through Abraham to Isaac as part of the birthright. The blessing of Abraham is extraordinary in every way and it passes down to those who love God and walk by faith.

Esau despised this birthright blessing and chose to live by sight and the immediate desire for personal gratification (see Genesis 25:29-34). Esau rejected God's promised inheritance contained in the blessing of Abraham. In contrast, those who deny themselves and walk through the narrow gate in agreement with Jesus by the Holy Spirit have access to the blessings of Abraham. This is a pearl of great price for which we should be willing to sell all to get (see Matthew 13:46).

Jacob received the spiritual inheritance of God's promises to Abraham and Isaac. God reconfirmed these promises to Jacob. Jacob knew the Lord and also became an extremely wealthy man just as Abraham and Isaac were. God's blessings include wealth.

The legal right to inherit the wealth and blessings of the father are passed down through sonship rights. Adopted sons have the same legal rights as natural born sons. We are adopted sons through faith in Christ Jesus and have inheritance rights to the blessings of Abraham (see Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:5). Those rights were paid for by Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Galatians 3:13-14

God intended His blessings, the blessing of Abraham, to go to all the nations of the world instead of just remain upon the nation of Israel. The blessing of Abraham includes the promise of the Holy Spirit that is given to those who put their faith in Christ Jesus. The Pharisees believed they were children of Abraham because of natural lineage. Jesus taught that the true children of Abraham were those who walked by faith and followed Him.

Today, as a person repents and believes in the Lord Jesus, they receive the Holy Spirit Who is the main part of the blessings of Abraham. The Holy Spirit is our inheritance. Jesus died to redeem us from every curse under the law so that we could have full access to the inheritance of God through faith.

For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Hebrews 9:16-18

The legal rights of the inheritance are not usually activated until the father (first-born son) dies and passes it on to the next first-born son. Jesus is the first-born Son of God who was worthy to receive the full inheritance from His Father. Jesus died and rose into heaven. Now the inheritance of all that He had while on earth and all that He has in heaven is available to be accessed by those sons of God who take their place of faith and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Blessed with Every Spiritual Blessing

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Ephesians 1:3-4

God's word is clear that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. All of the blessings of Abraham, all the promises of God and all of the inheritance of Christ has been placed into an account with your name on it. This account includes the following blessings:

1. Eternal salvation from damnation to glory, from darkness to light, from servants of Satan to servants of God – I Peter 1:3-9
2. The power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and enable us to walk holy before God – I John 1:9
3. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit – I Corinthians 6:19
4. The fruit of the Holy Spirit – Galatians 5:22,23
5. The gifts of the Holy Spirit – I Corinthians 12
6. The impartation of the divine nature of God – II Peter 1:1-4
7. The grace to walk in divine health - Exodus 23:25,26; Mark 16:17,18
8. Authority over Satan's kingdom and to cast out demons – Luke 10:19
9. Power to heal the sick – Mark 16:17,18
10. The power of the Holy Spirit to do the greater works – John 14:12-14
11. The wisdom, knowledge and joy to gain wealth and resources – Ecclesiasties 2:21; II Corinthians 8:9
12. The anointing of God to fulfill your destiny on earth bearing fruit to the glory of God – I John 2:27
13. Everlasting rewards reserved in heaven for you – Hebrews 11:6
14. The power of prayer in the name of Jesus – John 15:16
15. The full armor of God – Ephesians 6:12-18
16. The word of God to equip and guide us – II Timothy 3:16,17
17. All the promises of God are yes and Amen in Christ – II Corinthians 1:20
18. Your new identity in Christ; forgiven, a new creature in Christ, the position of a son, a part of the body of Christ, betrothed as the bride to Jesus, an important part of God's family, a priest and king unto God – II Corinthians 5:17

While all of these blessings are available to every Christian who enters through the narrow gate, the reality is that few believers throughout history have accessed much of their inheritance in their daily life. The Holy Spirit is available to us without measure. However, the measure we experience on earth is reciprocal to the measure of faith and maturity that we walk in.

If there was a faith/maturity (FM) scale from 1 to 100 percent, a person with 40% FM could activate 40% of his inheritance. A believer

with a 70% FM reading could activate 70% of the inheritance. Jesus walked in 100% FM and was able to access everything the Father wanted Him to walk in. Jesus declared that those who believed in Him (with the same level of faith He had) would do greater works than what He did (John 14:12-14).

Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, we need to be taught the word of God by the Holy Spirit (see Romans 10:17). This is an essential ingredient in activating and experiencing God's promises and blessings. We must hear the word by Spirit and not by our own reason or mental ascension.

Faith works through love which is a fruit of maturity (Galatians 5:6). This love first of all focuses on loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and loving your neighbor (Luke 10:27). Jesus commanded us to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34). When we love God and others, our faith will be activated in our prayers for them to access the promises of God so that they may be touched by the love of God.

God's deliverance and healing power moves through love along with all of His glorious gifts in the inheritance. God wants our hearts to be filled with compassion for needy people and flow in mature love to minister His life to them. God has a specific vineyard for every believer to minister in.

My wife and I used to have an extremely busy ministry teaching many children, teens and parents in urban ministry. During the last six years, the Lord has had me focus more on prayer, Bible study, reflection and writing. I used to wrestle with teenagers and have children hanging all over me at camp. Those were wonderful days and I know God was leading me to be in active outreach ministry. Now the Lord is calling me deeper into the word and to write books so that more can receive instruction. He has also done a lot of pruning in my heart so that He can bear more fruit.

Maturity in Christ is a process of growth rooted in yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit and obeying His voice in all things. Maturity will always include prayer and the word led and taught by the Spirit. The Spirit will lead us to repent of old ways and believe, taking the impartation of faith to become conformed to the image of God in Christ. Access to the treasure vault of God's inheritance is found along the pathway of maturity.

Joint Heirs with Christ

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

Paul taught us that we are children of God and heirs with Christ if we suffer with Him. The suffering is a part of the life of self-denial, taking up our cross and being yoked with Jesus. All who choose to walk by the Spirit will experience some suffering. No one will reach mature sonship without considerable difficulties and challenges as we discussed in Chapter 3. These momentary light afflictions produce in us an eternal weight of glory (see II Corinthians 4:17).

We have God as our inheritance and we are co-heirs with Christ. The inheritance of God includes the presence of God in our lives by the Holy Spirit. The seven-fold Spirit of God is available in us to produce Christ-like character and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The inheritance of the Spirit gives us wisdom, understanding, counsel, might (power), knowledge, the fear of the Lord and authority. He enables us to walk just as Jesus walked.

Thus says the Lord GOD: "If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance." Ezekiel 46:16

Jesus is the Prince of Peace who gives gifts of His inheritance to His followers. Those gifts are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God will not take them back. While God freely gives gifts, it is often necessary to position our hearts to receive them. God gives gifts to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13). Prayer and fasting can position the heart in purity and faith to activate the release of inheritance gifts.

The Lord called me to do a forty-day fast in 1997. At the end of that fast, the Spirit led me to attend a conference where I received prayer, the laying on of hands and the impartation of prophetic anointing. I did not know that God was going to give me prophetic gifts at the end of this fast, I was simply obeying His voice. Those gifts have never left me, but God has required me to mature in the use of them.

It is unwise to pull on God in prayer for certain anointings and gifts with fanatical zeal. Our hearts may be in idolatry wanting to be famous or special in the kingdom of God. A person can access some gifts before God has produced the character required to walk in

humility and holiness so that the gift does not become a stumbling block. God will sometimes give us what we are fervently praying for even though it is not the best time for us to receive it. This happened to God's people in the wilderness.

They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. Psalm 106:13-15

Entering through the narrow gate keeps us on the pathway that God intends us to walk in. We must not run ahead of God or lag behind. God calls us to walk in agreement with Jesus, yoked with Him.

God Himself is our Inheritance

It shall be, in regard to their inheritance, that I am their inheritance. You shall give them no possession in Israel, for I am their possession. Ezekiel 44:28

The gospel of the kingdom, the narrow gate and the door lead us to the truth that God is our inheritance. As we begin to understand the inheritance of God, we will be more eager to grow up and become mature sons so that we can walk in Him and access our full inheritance as adopted sons.

The Spirit prophesied to Ezekiel that the inheritance of the priesthood would be God Himself. This refers to those born from above who receive the Holy Spirit and follow Jesus as their High Priest. We are called to be priests unto God and inherit Him as an everlasting inheritance. Believers in Christ are His betrothed bride who become fully one with Him.

All true Christians will inherit God forever in everlasting joy, righteousness and peace. However, only mature sons of God who walk in faith by the Holy Spirit will access the incredible resources of their inheritance during their life on earth. Everything that Christ accomplished on the cross for us is available as part of our inheritance.

The Seven-fold Spirit of God

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and uderstanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:1-2

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.
Revelation 4:5

The seven-fold Spirit of God rested upon Jesus who walked in His inheritance as a mature son demonstrating what God intends us to walk in as mature sons. Jesus died on the cross and rose into glory. Some fifty days after Jesus died, the promise of the inheritance, the Holy Spirit, was poured out upon those faithful believers in the upper room (see Acts 2). The result of this great outpouring was the empowering of the mature disciples to walk in the same anointings as Jesus demonstrated. The gospel was preached in great power converting thousands, the sick were healed, the demonized set free and many miracles were performed. The early church immediately walked in their inheritance. That inheritance is passed down through the ages and we have access to all that has gone on before us as the Spirit leads. God wants the fullness of the Holy Spirit to dwell in and move through the body of His Son. This will occur before He returns.

The Holy Spirit is the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. Seven is the complete divine number. Isaiah saw those seven qualities or flames of fire coming to rest upon Jesus who walked in that full anointing.

This seven-fold anointing begins with the covering of the Spirit of the Lord, the “ruwach of Jehovah”. Ruwach refers to the breath or wind of God. The Lord’s Spirit comes to dwell upon us and gives us supernatural abilities we could not otherwise have. All through scripture, the Spirit of the Lord empowers God’s people to walk holy, prophecy, overcome adversaries and do mighty exploits.

Everything we will ever need is summarized in the seven-fold Spirit of God. He gives us the Spirit of wisdom and understanding so that we

may perceive and understand everything God has for us. Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord but also imparts divine skill and words of wisdom to gain wealth and blessings. Understanding enables us to perceive truth and lies and make excellent decisions.

The Spirit of counsel and might is given to us so that we have divine strategies and the power to carry out God's plans. Wise counsel often comes through church elders who have walked with the Holy Spirit for decades. God delights to give us counsel. We need His might to walk out His guidance and the Spirit provides it all.

The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord gives us everything we need to walk in authority and power. Because of true knowledge, we know the wiles of the enemy and because we fear the Lord, we will not be deceived by false voices.

The Spirit of the fear of the Lord gives us the heart condition to preserve us from sin and walk in complete obedience to the Lord at all times. The Spirit delivers us from the fear of man and the desire to please people. The natural man seeks the approval of peers, parents and leaders. God wants our hearts to be completely fixed on pleasing Him and seeking His approval.

We need the impartation of the seven-fold Spirit of God. We need the fullness of the seven flames burning in our hearts to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and impart the divine passion of Jesus to do the Father's will. Zeal for God's house will consume us as the flames of the Holy Spirit rise in our hearts.

Many believers have run from the fire of God to their own destruction. We must run to the brazen altar of God and let Him burn up our flesh with fire. We need to wash in His holy laver by the word and receive the divine nature of God. It is our inheritance to be made priests and kings unto our God. The pathway of the narrow gate puts us on track to mature and become all that God has for us.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. John 15:16

God releases the great storehouse of blessings in His inheritance to us now so that we might bear lasting fruit and glorify the Father. As our heart focuses on bearing fruit to God's glory, we can ask whatever we need and access the power of God to accomplish every fruitbearing goal.

Patience is required as we seek to bear lasting fruit. God does not grow fruit in the human heart instantly nor does He often bear lasting fruit instantly in our ministry. When God wants to bear more fruit, He will prune us and teach us His ways at a higher level. The key at every level is to keep walking through the narrow gate of perfect obedience to the Holy Spirit. Then we will access more of Him and produce even more fruit for God's glory. God in His perfect grace will eternally reward all fruit that we bear by the power of the Holy Spirit. Apart from Him, we can do nothing of eternal value.

Warfare Necessary to Obtain the Inheritance of God

For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do--to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him--then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you. Deuteronomy 11:22-25

God promised an inheritance of land to Abraham and his descendants. Several hundred years later, God commanded Joshua to go in and take hold of the Promised Land by violent warfare. The basic instructions given to Moses and Joshua included loving God and obeying all of His word in order to take possession of God's promised inheritance. Once again we see the principles of the narrow gate in action.

There were seven powerful nations living in fortified cities in the Promised Land. They had no intention of giving up their place in the land but God determined to take a people in who were trained to walk by faith in His voice. Israel crossed the Jordan by God's miraculous intervention and saw the walls of Jericho come down through their obedience. God put His dread in the peoples and enabled Israel to conquer as long as they obeyed His voice. Israel displaced the seven mighty nations and dwelt in the land of their inheritance.

What God directed Israel to do in the natural, He wants the Church to do in the spiritual. Our Promised Land is the inheritance of God's authority and power to displace satanic powers that control the spiritual atmosphere over regions. This demonic control of the spiritual realm over regions traps most of the people in darkness below. We are called to obey the voice of God and take cities for God's glory. We are called to rescue souls out of darkness and bring them into the light of Jesus Christ.

The battle begins in prayer warfare to bind the strongman so that we can plunder his goods. Jesus modeled this as He overcame Satan in the wilderness. We must overcome Satan and everything he sends at us to prevent us from growing up into the full measure of the stature that belongs to Jesus. The battle belongs to the Lord, but we must worship and pray in the Spirit and obey His voice to see it won. We must learn to take authority and place our feet on the devil's neck.

If it were easy to take hold of the inheritance of God, more Christians would be walking in God's glorious power. We must war for our inheritance in loving community. God is not going to give dominion to lone rangers. As we learn to walk in humility, holiness and love, God will give us the power of agreement with other mature sons so that we can displace spiritual forces of darkness and exercise benevolent dominion in our called vineyards to bring righteousness, peace and joy to the people. This is the inheritance of all the saints who walk through the narrow gate.

The demonic resistance to keep us from measuring up to the stature that belongs to Christ is great indeed. At each level of growth, we will discover new levels of resistance and difficulty to break through. Personal character will have to be developed to conform to the image of Christ. This will once again include repentance and believing.

We will have to put off the old and put on the new to get to each new level. At each level there is a stronger resistance and different set of principalities and powers to wrestle with. With the Spirit and the word, we can overcome as we completely obey His voice. Only the Holy Spirit can lead us to the place where we will eventually overcome Satan himself. Once we have reached that level of maturity, the strongman is bound and we will be able to plunder his goods, the lost souls who need Jesus, in massive numbers.

The Father's heart is set on reaching His lost sons and daughters. He loves the world and is not willing for any to perish. We are charged with going through the narrow gate so that we can overcome Satan

and loose many of his captives. God wants us to bear the fruit of bringing souls into the kingdom and equip them to walk like Jesus. As we begin to preach the gospel of Christ in true apostolic doctrine, God Himself will authenticate it with signs and wonders following so that new believers will come in with great zeal.

Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. Psalm 2:8

The Lord wants us to ask Him for the salvation of souls as part of our inheritance. Part of our inheritance in God is to win souls throughout the world. God will make all provisions necessary to win and equip the souls as we come up into full maturity as sons. These new believers in the nations must be properly equipped to go through the narrow gate and overcome all persecution, suffering and difficulty as they enter the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 6 – WALK IN THE SPIRIT

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29

Paul declared that all Christians are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Sonship is a legal position God gives by grace to those who are baptized into Christ (death to self) and have put on Christ (life to God). Sonship in God overshadows all national, economic and gender lines. All believers are heirs according to God's promise. Women believers are sons of God. This truth has yet to be realized in most of the Church.

Let's look closer at the gender bias. Many churches teach that women cannot minister at the same level as men in the body of Christ. Paul recognized that women had a legal right as "sons" before God. While the full measure of women in ministry was not seen by the Apostle Paul, the former Pharisee recognized that women had the same sonship rights as men. Therefore women have the same right to access their inheritance in God. Women are equal to men as heirs of God Himself and can walk in their full inheritance on earth.

As sons of God through faith who walk by the Spirit, I believe that women can be office level last-day apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists and teachers in the body of Christ. In fact, the best five-fold ministers of the last days will probably be women who have been willing to stand at the foot of the cross. We recall that most of the men disciples, except John, were absent at the cross (see Mark 15:40,41; John 19:25,26). Last-day servants of God must focus on Jesus on the cross and not run away from His cross. On the third day after the cross, Jesus first appeared to devoted, women disciples. As we enter the third day Church, the Lord will appear to many women who love Him and commission them to walk as heirs in five-fold offices.

Sons are led by the Spirit

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:13-14

God tells us that if we live according to the flesh, we will die. The Church has not believed this. The serpent told Eve in the garden that she could eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that she would not die (Genesis 3:4). The Church has taught people the same thing. Pastors have coddled sin and told people that they could struggle with sin and God's grace would cover them. God's word says that if we live according to the flesh, we will die. Sons of God are led by the Spirit and the Spirit enables them to put to death the deeds of the body in order to have life. True sons of God do not live according to the flesh.

The Galatian believers were falling into a trap of living according to the flesh of religion. Paul said they were returning to bondage under the elements of the world (Galatians 4:3). The root word for elements means "rank and file". When we get into religion, we are marching or going along with the flow of the world system. Satan wants us to be very religious just as the Pharisees and Saducees were in Jesus' day.

The entire flow of the world system is rooted in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil seen in the Garden of Eden. That tree symbolizes choosing to live by human wisdom instead of heavenly revelation. When we live by human wisdom in church matters, we change the threshold of God into His presence. When we change the thresholds or standards of God, the only door we go through is the door of delusion. By eating from this tree of natural reason, we become our own gods as we establish moral standards of what we think is right and wrong. What we think is based in natural reason, and our thinking is stinking with death! God says eating from this tree still produces death.

The only thinking that is worth entertaining is God's thinking which flows by revelation to those who worship Him and wait on Him. God has called us to follow His word taught by the revelation of the Holy Spirit rather than by human reason. If we labor to build God's house in our own ways, we labor in vain (see Psalm 127). We must build the house of God by the power of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of God. Therefore, any feeding from the evil tree will cause us to operate in a measure of death, change the threshold of God and cause us to walk in "immaturity" at best and full blown deception and rebellion at worst.

The world system flows based on human wisdom and perception that chooses to be one's own god in determining moral values and life's decisions. Those who attain to high standards by eating of the "good fruit" of this wicked tree become "self-righteous" Pharisees no matter what their religious persuasion. Those who attain to the lowest levels

of the evil fruit of this tree are perverted lawbreakers. The good fruit and the evil fruit of this tree of knowledge both produce death.

Cain ate of the fruit of this tree and offered a sacrifice of religion to God by the works of his own hands. Cain lowered the threshold! Abel offered a sacrifice by faith according to the voice of God. Cain was offended at Abel, hated him and killed him. When you or I operate by this evil tree and get into religion, we will be offended at those who are operating in faith by the Spirit under God's anointing. We will rise up in offense against them and usually say some critical words. We may not kill them with a pick ax, but our tongue has the power of life and death. If you ever find yourself critical of the Lord's anointed, go fall on your face quickly and repent before the Lord so that you do not fall into the religion of Cain.

Mature Sons Operate by Spirit Only

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:1-7

We are heirs of Christ and have an extraordinary inheritance as we discussed in the previous chapter. As long as we are immature, we are no different from a slave even though by position we have sonship rights as master of all. The Lord Himself keeps us under guardians and tutors until we mature. He will not release the fullness of our inheritance to us while we remain immature and act according to the flesh, eating by the tree of human reason.

Jesus came to completely release us from bondage to the elements of this world and empower us to walk in His miraculous life. Religion is a major aspect of the world system. The freedom Jesus brings us is not a license to sin and act with unrestrained liberty. The liberty of the Spirit is to be completely free from sin, deception, darkness, carnality and the effects of wickedness. The liberty of the Spirit is to feed on the tree of life and walk in perfect fellowship with Jesus by His grace.

Mature sons learn to walk by the Spirit in all things. They learn the good Shepherd's voice and will not follow a stranger. Mature sons don't need the law to tutor them or intense accountability structures because they love God with all their hearts and have grown to willingly follow the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus at all times. Unfortunately, most of the Church is bound up in religion and needs to be delivered.

Recently, our sixteen-year-old daughter Mary completed all the state requirements to obtain a California driver's license. The requirements included an age standard, a vision test, classroom instruction, twenty hours of supervised driving instruction, a written test and a final driving test. Mary also had to provide a thumbprint, signature and have her picture taken in order to be issued a license to drive a motor vehicle. The state recognizes the need for young people to reach a certain level of physical maturity and pass certain requirements before they will authorize a young person to drive on our roads. This is a good and acceptable standard that has already begun to save lives.

If Mary had come to us at age five and asked for the keys to the family car, we would have declined her request because she was not ready to handle the responsibility and power involved in driving a motorized vehicle. At eleven, Mary was still not ready. Even though she might have been physically ready at sixteen, Mary still needed to have instruction and take various tests. After completing all of these including a temporary permit process, Mary was mature enough to drive the car. When Mary asks us now if she can drive the car, we usually say yes.

The inheritance of God includes access to the divine power of God to flow in the extraordinary anointing of Jesus that includes powerful preaching, teaching, healing, delivering, discipling, miracles, signs and wonders. It is every believers' birthright to walk in the miraculous works of God. Due to immaturity, few of us ever meet all of God's qualifications so that He will release that kind of power to us and through us. As long as we operate by forms of carnality and religion, we are immature and remain under the tutor of the Law. When we learn to walk by the Spirit at all times and faithfully obey God in all things, we will eventually pass all the tests required to walk in divine power.

Cast out the Bondwoman and Her Son

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. Galatians 4:28-31

Everything in our lives that comes by the flesh is incapable of inheriting the promises of God. Abraham ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil when he listened to Sarah's suggestion to go into Hagar to produce an heir. God's heirs are not produced by works of the flesh. Abraham was uncircumcised at the time he went into Hagar who was a slave from Egypt. Their offspring, Ishmael, became a wild donkey of a man and was contentious towards his half brother Isaac even as it is today between Arabs and Jews.

The sons of Ishmael are sons of the religion of man based on good ideas and trying to help God out. We cannot help God accomplish His precious promises by operating in the flesh. The flesh only produces death.

Abraham rightly loved Ishmael and yet he was required to send him away. Although Abraham was arguably the richest man on the earth, God told him through his wife to cast out Hagar and Ishmael without any inheritance. When you examine this carefully, it is extraordinary.

So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Genesis 21:14

One of the wealthiest men alive sent away his first-born son and concubine with a loaf of bread and a few gallons of water. At first this seems cruel and unusual punishment. It wasn't Hagar's idea to have relations with Abraham. Ishmael was a beloved son of Abraham. God must have commanded Abraham not to give any gifts to Hagar or Ishamael otherwise his natural affections would have led him to do so. God was establishing a picture for us that those who operate by the flesh will only end up with bread and water in this life and everlasting judgment in the life to come.

A Little Leaven Leavens the Whole Lump

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Galatians 5:7-9

Every aspect of religion is as leaven that influences everything around it. Jesus told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:11,12). The doctrine of the religious inflates the mind as leaven causes bread to rise. Leaven does not add any nutritional value but like intellectual religious knowledge, it only puffs a person up with pride.

If we operate by the Spirit in some aspects of our walk with Jesus and by the flesh or religion in other aspects, the religious leaven will rise up to influence our entire life. Paul was extremely militant against the "Circumcision" gang who came in after him to teach the Galatians that they had to keep the Law to be pleasing to God. Going back under the Law, which had been fulfilled in Christ, was to negate the blessings of the cross of Jesus.

Operating by religion of any kind is a denial of the power of the cross to forgive our sins, heal our sicknesses, conquer our demons, provide for our prosperity, enable us to walk holy and bear fruit for God. Everything we receive from God comes by placing our faith in the finished work of the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

God has been teaching me to walk in the miraculous provisions of God by faith in the virtue of Jesus' poverty on the cross. **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).** When Jesus laid aside all of His riches in heaven and purposely became poor, He did so to bear the burden of our poverty so that we would not have to live in the shame of financial bondage. Jesus provided atoning virtue on the cross so that we might become rich through faith in His finished work.

This is exactly how salvation and healing work. We are saved by grace through faith in the cross of Jesus and not by works (Ephesians 2:8,9). We are healed by grace through faith in the stripes of Jesus (I Peter 2:24). While most Christians agree that we are saved and healed by grace through faith, most Christians think that they have to do "works" in order to earn God's prosperity.

We have to learn to do the work of faith in order to have God's prosperity. We must grow in faith in the virtue of Jesus' sacrifice and realize that He loves us and wants us to have an abundant life. Then whatever the Holy Spirit tells us to do in terms of work, we must do

that with all our hearts unto God and not to man. By obeying God's voice, we are walking by faith in the good works that He called us to do. God promises to provide for all our needs as we seek first His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

There are certain teachings about financial prosperity that are out of balance, incomplete and in error. I plan to address these in great detail in an upcoming book called **FROM RAGS TO RICHES.** For now, I just want to encourage you to believe God's word and obey His Holy Spirit so that you may prosper.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

God's narrow gate requires us, in response to His mercy, to present our bodies as living sacrifices acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). This includes all of our money, time, and talent. You name it, He claims it! All of who we are belongs to Him. The good news is that all of who He is belongs to us. The exchange is well worth it!

God told me in 1997 to resign my position and go to a place that He would show me. He directed us into a place of prayer. I was completely unemployed and to this date still do not have a normal job. God called me to pray and seek His face day and night for many months. Then He told me to start writing books. When I asked the Lord about work, He spoke to me from John 5:29 **"Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'"**

The Lord called me to work at developing faith in Him. By His grace, I have devoted myself to hours of prayer and Bible studies most days each week. I have learned how to hear the Spirit's voice and continue to develop in this grace. We have learned to walk by faith in God's voice. After six years of living this way with a wife and six children, all of our needs have been met and we live in an incredible measure of prosperity. God is absolutely amazing.

The Lord is calling some believers to take bold steps of faith and obey His voice in unconventional ways. God's job for me has been to work at developing faith in Him. He told me that I could have as much money as I have faith for. Then I realized how little faith I had in God's ability to provide. Since faith comes by hearing, I needed to pray, study God's word and wait to hear by the Spirit. It has been the

hardest job of my life at times because God requires me to wait on Him for long periods of time in prayer and sometimes fasting in order to get the revelation of His voice.

Since Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith, we must develop an intimate relationship with Him and allow Him to speak into our hearts how much wealth to believe for. Recently, after ten years of prayer for a vehicle to replace our broken down van, the Lord began speaking to Glenda and me. During one month, I had four dreams about a vehicle, a vision and studied great deal of scripture on God's blessing. I prayed for a few weeks that if the Lord would speak to me clearly about a vehicle, that I would have enough faith to obey and trust Him. Finally, as I stayed up late and prayed waiting on the Lord, He spoke to me. The generous Father said, "Go and pick out any vehicle you want, and I'll take care of the cost." The next day, Glenda and I went shopping and bought a brand new family vehicle. Our past financial history indicated that we could not afford it. But we were not looking back, we were looking up. God said to go for it and we believed and obeyed. A few days later a surprise large check came in the mail as a major part of the provision.

There is a great deal of talk about wealth transfer in the body of Christ. All supernatural kingdom wealth transfer is based on the virtue of Jesus flowing by inheritance rights to mature sons. The wealth of inheritance will not flow to immature sons. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. All the gold and silver belongs to God along with all the currencies and commodities of the world. Everything belongs to God and He desires to give wealth as part of His inheritance to His sons now so that we can advance His kingdom. Those who learn to walk by faith and live by the word and the Spirit will mature to access a great wealth transfer. They will not have to slave under an Egyptian taskmaster system to provide for their families.

Walk in the Spirit

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:24,25

Paul's main message in Galatians is to walk in the Spirit. There is no power in religion to overcome the lust of the flesh. The reason there is so much carnality in the Church today is simply because the Church is filled with religion. Religion is a life of performance in order to gain

approval from God. This is an exercise in futility since all of our approval is already given to us when we believe in the cross of Jesus.

Religion enables man to operate by the soul realm of reason rather than the Spirit of revelation that requires many hours of prayer to attain. Intellectual Christianity has a form of godliness but no power to live a holy life or to heal a diseased person. Every fruit has a root. The fruit of American Christianity is bad. The root is walking in the natural man, the religion of Cain and operating in the soul realm of reason. This is a religion of death and many are they who walk therein.

True Christianity is walking through the narrow gate yoked closely to Jesus who leads us by the Holy Spirit and His voice primarily through His word. Those who walk by the Spirit will put to death the deeds of the flesh and will be conformed to the image of God's Son. The rest of this book will focus on the maturity of Christ, the Son of God. He is our model and perfect example on how to live. We are called to walk as Jesus walked and live like He did. The Holy Spirit and the word of God give us the power and the equipping to follow Jesus. As you enter the narrow gate and focus your heart on Him, He will transform you over time to become just as He is.

CHAPTER 7 – THE BOY CHRIST JESUS

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. Luke 6:40

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher so that we can become like Jesus. The Holy Spirit leads us through the narrow gate as we examine Jesus' life and get into agreement with His heart attitudes seen in His behavior and words. The rest of this book is going to focus on the model of the life of Jesus, the narrow gate Himself. As we behold Him with unveiled faces, we will be transformed to become like Him from one level of glory to another (II Corinthians 3:18).

We have established that the narrow gate is God's call to walk yoked with Jesus in perfect agreement and intimate relationship. God commands us, through Christ, to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Luke 9:23). The scriptural record of Jesus' earthly life is inspired by God to teach us how to walk as Jesus walked. The Holy Spirit is the only one Who can perfectly train us, but God does give the anointing of teacher to five-fold leaders. As you study these following chapters, pray for the Teacher to equip you so that you can be transformed into the image of God and glorify His name. As you mature in Christlikeness, you will access more of His inheritance so that you can bear more fruit in the vineyard God has chosen for you.

The Supernatural Conception of Jesus

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also

conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:26-38

The incarnation of the eternal Son of God into a human body is a great mystery we celebrate every year. We are not given scriptural record of the scene in heaven when Jesus laid aside His glorious attributes to be conceived into the womb of a created woman.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit planned this moment from before the creation of the universe. I can picture the Father telling the Son that it was time for Him to go. Jesus lived in perfect agreement with the Father's word and always obeyed His voice.

The infinite King of Glory humbled Himself, laid aside His robes and crowns and disappeared from the court of heaven. Jesus' Spirit was sown by the Holy Spirit into a willing believing virgin who simply said, **"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."**

While this principle comes from the mouth of Mary, her heart spoke words inspired by the Holy Spirit. All life in Christ begins with a willingness to receive the word of God implanted in the heart. The word is the living and active seed of God to produce Christ in the heart of God's people. Mary received the word and the Son of God appeared in her womb in the tiniest form.

In order to mature in Christ, we must become like Mary and be willing to receive God's word into our heart and let Him change our life. Mary was willing to become pregnant by supernatural means even though this would risk her life and certainly destroy her reputation. We cannot explain many things of the Spirit that happen in our spiritual wombs to most people. God is still implanting the seed of Christ into willing vessels. We are not birthing the natural born Son of God, but we are birthing moves of His Spirit in our hearts. The incarnation of God in people continues today for those who walk by faith in God's word empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Infant Child

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were

completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." Luke 2:21-24

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to the prophetic word, and allowed Himself to be laid in a manger inside an ancient cave for animals. The humility of our Lord is exhibited throughout His life and must be a central part of our character.

The infant Child Jesus did not have the faculties of an adult or the full attributes of God. He laid aside those attributes of power, knowledge and strength to become a vulnerable eight-pound baby boy. He was circumcised on the eighth day fulfilling the covenant of the Law. Jesus always fulfilled the Law in every aspect of His life.

Jesus was dedicated fully to the Lord by His parents who worshipped God with an offering of thanksgiving. Simeon and Anna held Jesus and blessed Him. The prophetic word was spoken over Jesus early in His life. It is important that newborn believers have prophetic prayers of true prophets where possible.

Grow Strong in Spirit

So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.
Luke 2:39-40

It is vital that we follow the model of Jesus as we grow. He grew strong in spirit, was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him. We must spend much time in the house of God worshipping, praying and studying the word to grow strong in spirit. Our spirit man will not thrive in an old traditional church wineskin. It is essential to be in the right spiritual environment where the Holy Spirit moves in His glorious presence. Children need the right home atmosphere to flourish, and God gave that to Jesus through His parents. We may not have godly parents, but we can eventually make the choice to be a part of a church that is strong in the Spirit and follows the wisdom and grace of God.

The grace of God flows to the humble and wisdom flows to those who ask for it. We must humble ourselves daily and seek the wisdom and grace of God so that we can become like Jesus.

Be About the Father's Business

His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Luke 2:41-50

We learn volumes about the childhood of Jesus from this story given for our instruction. Jesus' audible voice is only recorded one time in His first thirty years of preparation for ministry. Jesus asked His earthly parents two questions, **"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"**

The Passover feast was the most important celebration of the year for Jews to attend. Joseph and Mary always attended and brought Jesus each year. During His twelfth year, when a Jewish boy is believed to become a man, the boy Jesus lingered in the temple in animated conversation with the elders. The Passover festival was completed three days prior, but Jesus' passion was to be about His Father's business. He became so absorbed in learning, that He stayed with the anointing on that moment. We don't know what Jesus ate or where He slept during those days. Perhaps He fasted and slept in the temple courts.

Jesus asked Mary and Joseph, **"Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"** In other words, the boy Jesus was asking, "Why did you look all over Jerusalem for me. Didn't you realize who I am and that I would be completely focused on seeking My Father in His temple?" Apparently, the temple was not the first place Jesus' parents checked for Him. Perhaps it was

a long search and as parents are prone, Mary and Joseph may have been nervous and not just a little put out that Jesus was not with the group as expected. As we seek the Lord, we must look for Him in the house of God and be about His business.

Many believers today have become frustrated with the Church and have begun to seek the Lord outside the Church. Home groups have formed that are providing some worship, fellowship and teaching, but most of them are not churches. A mature Christian must develop a healthy relationship with a local body of Christ and spend lots of time in the house of God.

Jesus was found in the temple in the midst of the elders. We must learn to sit in the midst of teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. Jesus must have studied the word of God as much as He was able. He attended Hebrew training and synagogue services. As a faithful Jewish boy, Jesus listened intently to those who taught. Jesus learned by the Holy Spirit and memorized the scriptures and received the understanding deep in His heart.

Jesus eagerly listened and learned from those He created. As a teacher in the body of Christ, I speak to many people. I seek to maintain intimate eye contact with the audience. Within twenty minutes of speaking, I can easily identify the hungry listening hearts who are searching to know God. It's easy to pick out those who are not hungry as well. Jesus had a hungry heart to learn and He wasn't too proud to learn from His elders, even though He was God incarnate.

Many in the church have become unteachable and unwilling to learn. It grieves me to see anyone in the audience distracted or simply bored with the word of God. When I went to Bible college, I had an insatiable appetite to learn from the professors. I dominated many classroom discussions asking question after question. I often went to the office of one professor or another to ask more questions. I read the Bible hours a day and usually read four or more books a week about the Bible.

Jesus had an insatiable appetite for the word of God and the knowledge of His Father. He had to learn just as we learn. The Father did not miraculously download the word of God to Jesus. The holy Son learned by the Spirit in His pure heart, but He also learned from human teachers.

Jesus' understanding of the scriptures astonished the elders of Israel. As a twelve-year-old boy, He had a grasp of spiritual truth that would

amaze us today. Our twelve-year-old daughter Elizabeth has grasped things in the Spirit that have astounded me since she was a small child. Her hunger for the Lord is precious and she loves to be in the church and learn from the word of God.

Recently, Elizabeth was distracted during a teaching time and entered into what many may consider normal twelve-year-old behavior. She was giggling and passing notes to another young person completely disrespecting the pastor who was teaching. My spirit picked up the distraction and I looked back at Elizabeth and sought to bring her focus back. The small group of young people got so loud at one point that I went back and put my hands on their shoulders and asked them to quiet down and learn. Unfortunately, the behavior pattern did not change significantly. After the meeting was over I gently confronted Elizabeth who apologized to me quickly. I simply told her to go to the altar of the church and talk to God about it since she had disrespected His word and not mine.

Elizabeth knelt down at the altar of our church and the Holy Spirit came upon her with godly sorrow. Amazingly, she wept for over thirty minutes as she embraced the Spirit's conviction for her irreverence and unteachable heart. Another young woman went forward on her own and wept even louder to confess sins and call upon the Lord. It was a sign and a wonder. Most of us need to go to the altar and repent long and loud for our disinterest in knowing God or loving His word.

An hour later, Elizabeth sat next to me and I hugged her and loved on her. I reminded her of the boy Jesus at twelve years old and it spoke to her clearly that she was to be just like Jesus in the house of God. By the grace of God, Elizabeth hungers and thirsts after the living God and I know that she will be great in the kingdom of God. She put her heart back on a clear pathway of hungering to learn by the Spirit. I doubt if she will ever forget the lesson God taught her at the altar that day. She told me it was okay for me to print her story here as well.

God has given much grace for my wife Glenda and me to raise six children to follow the Lord by His Spirit devoted to His word. Eventually, I plan to write a book about raising children unto the Lord. One of the most important things parents can do is expect their children to reverence the word of God. We started reading the Bible at the dinner table to our children when they were infants. It may sound strange, but we expected them to listen to the word of God when they were in the high chair, when they were two, three, four and following.

Glenda and I believed in having our children with us in church most of the time. If the children really want to go to children's church or Sunday School during the main service, we allow them too, but most of our children have stayed with us in the main service for their entire life. We taught our children from the first moments to respect the house of God and desired their presence with the adults.

As a result, God has used our children to flow in the worship services powerfully. They minister to many adults as well now. People love to have my children pray over them because the anointing is so strong on them and they are so pure.

I've heard parents say that it is impossible to get a two year old to sit still in church. I've heard all kinds of reasons why children should have their own programs in a separate room. I think many times, this is an escape mechanism for the parents. I have always wanted my children at my side at every service. Our children, when they were very young, learned to sit still or draw quietly during services during messages that I even found to be rather tedious. We taught them respect for the word of God and longed to instill a hunger for the knowledge of God.

As our family moved deeper into the things of the Spirit, the new churches we attended had lively worship and prophetic dance. The children stepped into the things of the Spirit without hesitation. It was miraculous. They are extraordinarily anointed worshippers and intercessors (ages 8 – 20 in 2002). Children can become just like Jesus and we should expect them to follow His pattern. This will usually only happen if the parents are on fire for Jesus and His house.

Submission to Authority

Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:51,52

Every word we have about the boyhood of Jesus is precious. Jesus submitted to his earthly parents. His appointed father was Joseph, a righteous man, but he was a fallen creature. Mary was not perfect either. Jesus had good parents but they did not understand the things of the Spirit as Jesus did. Even so, we observe Jesus submitting to His earthly parents during his childhood.

Submitting to authority is one of the most important principles in developing into Christ-like maturity. It is a doctrine that has been

abused almost more than any other, and many church leaders have operated in unrighteous control and domination. Most of us could share a story or two of how certain leaders wounded us by their carnal words or abusive leadership. The enemy assaults leadership continually and we need to pray for them.

As we follow the Holy Spirit, He will lead us to churches with imperfect leadership. He doesn't have any other options at this point. We have to humble ourselves, as Jesus did, to be subject to imperfect leaders who stumble badly at times. The Lord may lead us to change churches to find better leadership, but no leaders have arrived at perfection. They will be held accountable for their leadership.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

The word of God is clear that we must obey those in the church who rule over us and we must be submissive to them. Submission is an inner attitude of trust that actively submits to leadership rather than acting independently or hiding things from them. We are called to bring them joy and not grief. If our disobedience or carnal living grieves the leadership, it is unprofitable for us.

Many Christians worship independence and refuse to truly submit to any church leaders. They are trapped in bitterness due to woundedness and are in subtle rebellion against God. They are often angry and suspicious of leaders and speak evil against them. Their minds justify their insubmission by constant faultfinding. The fact is, some leaders have many faults, but the scripture still calls us to submit to them.

I've ministered in churches where the pastor has not developed strong sensitivity to the Holy Spirit moving in meetings. I've seen pastors who are more concerned about control and getting out on time than they are in seeing the people receiving ministry from the Lord. No matter what the pastor tells me to do, I have set my heart to obey him. If the pastor tells me to be done by noon, I will finish at 11:59AM no matter what the Spirit may be doing. In some cases, the anointing has been so great, that the pastor has given me extended liberty to keep going. In other cases, I've seen the pastor shut down the meeting irregardless of what God was doing.

We used to joke about having to use the parking lot to do our most effective ministry because pastors couldn't handle our nontraditional

methods of praying for individuals. The power of God can move in a parking lot when the altar of the church is closed to the moving of the Spirit. It is not our job to change people who are insensitive to the Holy Spirit. It is our calling to submit to church leadership at all times, unless they tell us to outright sin against God.

Wait on God for Release into Ministry

Jesus stayed in subjection to his Jewish parents for many years. The Bible does not tell us when He transferred that submission directly to the Father, but it was in the perfect timing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus always walked in the perfect timing of the Spirit.

At 25, Jesus could have had the most sensational ministry, but He waited on the Father and developed His relationship in prayer and learned the scriptures. Jesus did not attend the religious schools of the rabbis as far as we know. He may have continued to work as a carpenter to support the family as history indicates that Joseph died before Jesus began His ministry years.

At 29, Jesus could have been the greatest minister of all times, but He waited patiently on God's release. The compassion in Him for people must have been growing steadily as He longed to preach to them and minister His healing love. God held Jesus back from ministry until precisely the right time. It was not until 30 years old, that the Hebrews recognized a person as ready to be a Rabbi.

We can learn from the life of Jesus to wait on God's timing to be released into ministry. Our church culture is so eager to have volunteers that we will often put any enthusiastic young believer to work in the church as soon as possible. Jesus waited thirty years before stepping into ministry. We need to be patient and wait on the Lord for the perfect timing of the Spirit before entering into ministry.

God's pathway to maturity is a narrow gate that takes time to develop. Entering into active ministry too soon can severely limit the maturity of the individual. Many American Christians are extremely performance oriented and want to do something to be involved or to feel good about themselves. Christian leaders tend to affirm the performers and misunderstand the people who fast, pray and wait on God.

Jesus simply waited on the Father and the Spirit. He developed in every aspect in preparation to be a great teacher and the Savior of the world. When the time was right, the Holy Spirit led Him to go down

to the Jordan River to finish His preparation season and move into active ministry.

CHAPTER 8 – JESUS AT THE JORDAN RIVER

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:13-17

The forerunner ministry of John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus to come into ministry. God raised up John the Baptist to be a plowing warrior breaking up the fallow ground of many hardened hearts. God graciously sends preparers so that we will receive Jesus when He comes. Jesus' baptism event has several key principles that we must adopt to become like Jesus.

Go and Learn From Existing Moves of the Spirit

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. Matthew 3:13

Jesus traveled from His home region to the Jordan River to submit to baptism at the hands of John. The Jordan River has many historical and spiritual pictures concealed in the scriptures. For Joshua and the people of Israel of his day, the Jordan pictured the transition out of the wilderness into the Promised Land. The Jordan also pictures the generational flow of the ages that comes from Adam and goes into the Dead Sea unless rolled back by the salvation purchased in Christ. The Jordan region is a place of washing from sin as pictured in Naaman (see II Kings 5). The Jordan is a picture of repentance, death to the old self and turning to the new life in Christ.

Jesus walked to the Jordan River from Nazareth. This establishes a simple principle for us that we must go to places as the Spirit leads and learn from those who flow in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. John was leading a forerunner movement of the Spirit to prepare people to receive Jesus. Jesus understood the importance of John's ministry and went and submitted to the anointing on John to baptize. This astounded John who was, at first, unwilling to baptize Jesus.

Jesus told John that he should permit it so as to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus was being led by the Spirit and needed to obey His voice. There was a great model involved in this whole baptism, as we shall see. We need to humble ourselves and go and learn from those whom God has given a grace to minister. I have traveled by plane and traveled a long way by vehicle to hear anointed ministers.

There is a move of the Spirit in Argentina, and I attended a conference led by Argentine ministers in Dallas. I submitted myself to teaching and the laying on of hands by anointed men and women. God has used powerful ministries to impact my life. Bishop Mussisi from Uganda prayed for me and prophesied great blessings.

The Spirit told me to go to an all night prayer meeting an hour drive away where later Mahesh Chavda spoke two life changing words over me as he laid hands on me. God used John Arnot's ministry to heal my back miraculously and impart some of the Toronto blessing. I've received blessings and anointing from attending Mike Bickle's conference in Kansas city. We've sat under teaching by John Kilpatrick from Brownsville. Tommy Tenny, Kingsley Fletcher, Che Ahn, Lou Engle, Cindy Jacobs, Betty Friedsen, J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, Todd Bentley, Jack Hayford and many others have impacted our lives as we have submitted to their ministries and learned from them. We must be willing to go where the Spirit leads, humble ourselves, no matter who the minister is, and receive from them.

Jesus received as a boy from elders and teachers. As an adult coming into ministry, He received ministry from John the Baptist. He set a model for us all that we must humble ourselves and go and learn. We must also be baptized in water.

Be Baptized in Water

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water. Matthew 3:15

Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River. God commanded Jesus to humble Himself and set this perfect example. **"Jesus came up immediately from the water."** It is as though the Spirit of Jesus exploded out of the water of baptism like the space shuttle igniting at liftoff. Jesus' ministry was getting fired up and would soon be launched.

While Jesus was not a sinner, He was baptized in fulfilling all righteousness. He identified with the sins of His people. We need to

be baptized after we repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's teaching on baptism is especially helpful.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:1-14

Baptism is a vital first step of obedience to God as we demonstrate the reality of repenting and converting our life to walk by faith in Jesus Christ. Every believer should be baptized as soon as possible upon conversion. If the salvation message is properly presented, there is no reason to delay baptizing a convert who comes forward. We should seek the means to be able to baptize converts as soon as possible. It may be necessary to baptize the elderly or dying with gentle drops of water. The means is not as essential as the heart attitude of submission and obedience. While I do not believe that baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation, it is extremely important as a teaching model of the life required to follow Jesus.

Baptism is a powerful picture of walking through the narrow gate. Paul instructed the Romans that baptism was a portrait of our old self (sins) becoming dead with Christ and our new self being raised up with Christ. Baptism is a picture of a spiritual reality but also has a mysterious impact on our spiritual lives. It is more than a symbol of a

spiritual truth. God works to transform the heart as we humble ourselves and submit to baptism. Some believers have been saved for years and have never been baptized. Their pride and subtle rebellion has kept them out of the waters. Once they submit and give themselves wholeheartedly to obey God, the baptism event has a powerful impact on their Christian testimony.

Jesus never baptized anyone with water (John 4:2). He was called to baptize believers with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). We are commanded by God to make disciples and baptize converts in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). If converts are unwilling to be baptized, they are unwilling to submit to any human authority. God establishes His Church with human leaders, as imperfect as they may be.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Acts 2:38

Peter connected baptism with repentance and the remission of sins. He also declared that baptized converts would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after submitting to baptism. This is a pattern that God desires to see restored in the church. Many converts like myself got saved and then many weeks later got baptized. It was twenty-two years after that when I really got baptized in the Holy Spirit, and I'm still seeking the baptism of holy fire. I believe I did receive the Holy Spirit when I converted my life to Christ and I was sealed with Him.

However, due to poor teaching, I did not believe there was a baptism of the Holy Spirit and so I never desired more of the Holy Spirit's ministry in my life. God changed all that and now I can't seem to get enough of the Holy Spirit.

Walk in Identificational Repentance

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Luke 3:3

John preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Although John baptized in the water of the Jordan, the Holy Spirit wanted the people to be completely immersed in repentance for their sins. Jesus didn't have any sins to repent for, but He did stand in the waters of repentance on behalf of the nation of Israel.

The principle of identificational repentance has been taught often in the past decade in the Church as we have recognized the importance

of passages like II Chronicles 7:14. **“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 will forgive their sin and heal their land.”**

God wants to forgive our sins and heal our land. We have learned that wickedness on the land can create demonic strongholds. As part of the California Asian task force, we did a fifty-site prayer walk to repent for the sins Californians brought against Chinese immigrants who built our railroads. Teams from all over the state were given instructions on how to pray on behalf of those who had cheated, abused and killed Chinese workers. Teams went to each of the fifty sites where murders had been committed to ask God to forgive us for those horrible acts of violence.

We culminated the identificational repentance with a daylong meeting in the capitol building in Sacramento. A state senator wrote a letter of repentance, which was read at the meeting. Anglo pastors repented to Chinese pastors. Other Asians were involved as well as African Americans. We washed feet and asked forgiveness. God honors prayers like these and begins to heal the land.

Ezra repented on behalf of his people who intermarried with foreign wives in disobedience to God’s command (see Ezra 9). Nehemiah led the Levites and the people in identificational repentance for their sins as they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and restored covenant with God. **“Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers” (Nehemiah 9:2).**

Daniel did likewise and called upon God to restore His people to Jerusalem (I encourage you to read Daniel 9). Daniel mourned, fasted and cried out to God for mercy. Although Daniel was a righteous man, he identified with the sins of His people. He did not think of himself as better than those lawbreakers who got him into the captivity of Babylon.

It is vital that we follow the model of Jesus and be willing to identify with the sins of the people and do identificational repentance with them and as often as needed. I spent thirteen years living among African Americans. Their history is rooted in slavery and tremendous racist abuse at the hands of white people. Although I never did anything personally against blacks, I often stood in the gap and repented on behalf of Anglos. God has used this to break down barriers and heal relationships. There are excellent books available on identificational repentance which are worthy of further study.

Be Baptized in the Holy Spirit

And behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. Matthew 3:16

Jesus received the baptism of the Holy Spirit after water baptism. The Spirit of God came like a beautiful dove upon Jesus. The dove pictures the peace of God and the anointing from above. The dove has a single focus and will only mate once. The Holy Spirit wants to immerse us into a single focus of pleasing God and have only one heart affection, to love Jesus.

There has been, unfortunately, much division in the body of Christ over the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Having been on the other side of the debate for years, I understand the arguments against a second experience to the salvation experience and the subjective nature of the baptism of the Spirit. However, I also recognize the need to be filled with and saturated in the Holy Spirit every day!

We need the Holy Spirit every day to bare fruit for the kingdom of God. The doctrine that I was taught led me to be afraid of the Holy Spirit and "subjective" experiences of emotion. The Holy Spirit has emotion and God created us with emotions. There is a mystical and mysterious element to the spiritual realm of God. We must be wise and careful, but we must not run from the ministry of the Holy Spirit in fear.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them so that they could be living martyrs obeying His voice throughout the earth. A few weeks later the Holy Spirit came and fell upon them.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:2-4

When the Holy Spirit came, there was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind. I believe this was a host of angels that were coming to bring anointings to the disciples. The Holy Spirit appeared to them as divided tongues as of fire and sat upon each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The result of this Holy Spirit baptism was the conversion of many souls into the kingdom of God. The disciples received great anointing and prayed for boldness to preach the gospel without fear. Jesus received the anointing of the Holy Spirit so that He could conduct His earthly ministry. We need all that the Holy Spirit has for us.

Experience the Love of the Father

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17

The heavens were opened above Jesus and He heard the audible voice of His Father declaring that He was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. Jesus had not conducted any public ministry up until this point. He only humbled Himself and obeyed the Holy Spirit by submitting to baptism by water, identificational repentance and receiving the Holy Spirit.

Jesus modeled what we all need after conversion. We need an open heaven revelation of the love of the Father that is not based on our performance or behavior. God loves us because He is love. He takes pleasure in our acts of faith and obedience as well.

Jesus needed to hear the revelation of the Father's perfect love and pleasure for Him in preparation to go through a grueling forty-day fast and wilderness experience. If Jesus needed to hear God's audible voice, how much more do we need to receive the love of the Father to heal us from our woundedness.

Many Christians never receive the revelation of the Father's love and have their hearts perfectly healed. The power of the blood of Jesus, the word of God and the Holy Spirit is sufficient to heal every person converted to Jesus. God usually uses the body of Christ to minister His healing love although He can certainly do it directly.

I recognize that there are deep needs in those Christians who have experienced extreme childhood abuse and rejection as adults. We have a great deal to learn and need to grow in anointing to heal the wounded sheep around us, but we must recognize that the love of the

Father is enough to heal when the heavens are truly opened to His revelation and voice.

As you preserver to go through the narrow gate in intimate relationship with Jesus and obey the Holy Spirit, the Lord will lead you to places where you can experience the Father's love. During a long season of prayer years ago, the Lord directed me to go to a conference on emotional healing. I did not think that I needed any emotional healing but reasoned that God wanted to equip me to heal others. I was wrong.

During the second day of the conference, the love of God tenderly touched areas of my wounded heart that were hidden to me. I wept and wept along with many others as the Spirit ministered healing and comfort to areas of childhood sorrow. A few years later, the Lord led my wife and me to attend a conference by Rodney Howard-Browne. On the second day, I wept as I sat in the front row under the anointing. Brother Rodney came to me and placed his hand on my head for about ten minutes as he continued talking to the crowd. Then he placed his hand gently on my cheek as I continued to weep under the love of God. That hand on my cheek was so anointed that it felt like the hand of Jesus to me. Hurts in my heart were being supernaturally healed. It was a glorious revelation of the Father's love as the heavens were opened to me.

Just a few weeks ago, I went forward at a service to receive prayer and an impartation of the Father's love. I wept and received more revelation of God's great love. Since I am one of the main ministers at this church, I then turned to pray for others who had come forward including a child and her father. God had given me a powerful dream with intercession that came back to me as I prayed over them. Both daughter and father went down under the power of God and experienced visions of Jesus coming to them and healing them with His perfect love. It was amazing to hear their testimonies later of how God's love healed them.

For many of God's children, it is a great struggle to overcome the rejection and abuse of their childhood. We often weep over people as we pray for them just feeling the pain in their hearts. No matter how much you have been wounded, God loves you and wants to heal your wounds. I have been receiving healing for over two decades at deeper levels. The healing also brings impartation of the divine life.

As you continue to press through the narrow gate, the Holy Spirit will lead you to places where you can encounter more and more healing and revelation of the Father's love. This revelation and impartation of

love is essential to go through the wilderness and overcome Satan as Jesus did. We shall look at this closely in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9 – WALK THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Matthew 4:1

The narrow gate includes a pathway through the wilderness that is led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus submitted to the Holy Spirit and fasted forty days in a barren wilderness area. Luke tells us that Jesus was tempted forty days by the devil (Luke 4:2) and Mark adds that there were wild beasts there in addition to Satan (Mark 1:13). Those wild beasts prophetically speak of demonic forces including principalities that came to assault Jesus.

As we press into the narrow gate, the Holy Spirit will intentionally lead us into warfare with the enemy. At times, it will be vital to fast in order to overcome. When I was writing the book, **THE SPEAR OF PHINEHAS**, which is about overcoming the queen of heaven with a passionate zeal for holiness, the warfare became intense. The Spirit led me to write the book and led me right into warfare at a much higher level than what I was accustomed to. The Holy Spirit led me to fast forty days in order to break through the demonic resistance. There was an incredible grace on me to fast and it enabled me to get the rest of the revelation and the anointing to finish the book.

In wilderness times, we will be tempted, tried and tested as the Lord allows our faith to be purified. God wants us to overcome temptations and although He does not tempt anyone, He allows a measure of temptation so that we can grow strong in faith and overcome. Jesus experienced every manner of temptation during the wilderness and His ministry.

Overcome Temptations

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:15,16 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:18

Jesus was thoroughly tempted, tested, proved and tried by the fiery trials of the wilderness and His life. He passed through the narrow gate and overcame. He is ever able to understand our needs and give us all the grace needed to overcome our temptations. God allows temptations and trials to prove the genuineness of our faith. **"The**

refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts" (Proverbs 17:3).

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. I Corinthians 10:13

The narrow gate includes a great deal of testings to prove character before God releases a great mantle of authority to walk in. Abraham was tested for many years as He waited on God's promise and then was tested by having to offer up Isaac.

Joseph lost everything and was tempted and tested in Pharaoh's dungeon for many years before being released unto his destiny. **"They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him" (Psalm 105:18,19).** Moses endured forty years of transforming trials before leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. David hid in caves and suffered greatly while waiting for God to fulfill His word to make him the king.

God is most gracious and wise in testing His servants before giving them authority. Saul was promoted prematurely by the demands of the people. Without proper heart preparations, Saul, who was a man after the peoples' hearts (fear of man), soon fell into pride and rebellion which led to witchcraft and oppressive leadership.

Jesus went through forty days of intense testing being tempted by devils and tried by the rigorous forty day fast in a wilderness environment. Perhaps he wandered southward to Mt. Sinai where Moses and Elijah had fasted forty days. During this time, Jesus certainly prayed, sang Psalms, meditated on the word of God and overcame every temptation that came His way.

There is tremendous spiritual power in fasting and Jesus modeled the power of fasting. If He needed to fast to overcome Satan, certainly we must also pursue a lifestyle of fasting to be overcomers. The Lord has led many believers including my wife and I to seek Him during a forty-day fast. God brings powerful breakthroughs in this time. Our oldest daughter recently followed in our footsteps and did her first forty-day fast. God worked in powerful ways during that fast and the benefits will be reaped in the years ahead.

While fasting, Jesus interceded for Israel and prayed over the mission the Father was revealing to Him. His prayers were so powerful that Satan himself eventually came to try to cause Him to sin. Although Jesus was tempted in all ways like us, the Holy Spirit recorded for us three specific temptations that we must understand to be overcomers like Jesus.

Live by the Word of God

And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:2-4

God does not tempt any man (James 1:13) but He allows temptations to test His servants. Satan is the tempter who continuously seeks to deceive man into sin. The first Adam fell into transgression but the second Adam, Jesus Christ, overcame.

Jesus was hungry and his body was beginning to break down after forty days without food. Everything within His natural body was crying out for food. Disguised as an angel of light, the tempter came and probably engaged Jesus in some pleasant conversation acknowledging what a wonderful man of God He was.

The tempter knew that if he could get Jesus to doubt the goodness of God and break out of complete dependence upon the Father for one act, Jesus would sin and fall under his control in the area of natural appetites. **"If you are the Son of God"** was an attempt to bring doubt to the word of God which was spoken at Jesus baptism. Likewise, Satan will challenge our identity in Christ and tempt us to think unbiblical thoughts about ourselves.

"Command that these stones become bread" tempted Jesus to act on His own initiative using His power to fulfill a self-centered need. The power of God was entrusted to Jesus to meet others needs and the Father was not directing Him to turn stones into bread. It is significant that Jesus overcame this temptation by quoting from Deuteronomy 8 which clearly outlines the purpose of the wilderness and how we are to live.

And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep

His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Deuteronomy 8:2-3

God allowed the children of Israel to hunger as they departed from Egypt to bring to the surface what was in their hearts. The whole congregation complained against Moses and Aaron and longed to go back to Egypt. **"Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:3).** God had taken them out of Egypt, but Egypt was still in their hearts. In spite of the slavery and oppression, they missed the familiarity and creature comforts that Egypt had to offer. God tests the hearts to bring to surface the evil so He might skim it off the top and purify us as we repent. (see Malachi 3:2,3)

Jesus obeyed God's voice and responded clearly to Satan that He would not complain, He would not take matters into His own hands and that He would not put his stomach and personal interests first. Jesus determined to live based on every word that proceeded from the mouth of God.

Jesus teaches us here that it is the "Rhema" of God, the active now "word" of God that is brought to the heart and mind by the Holy Spirit that enables us to live. As Jesus considered the challenge of the tempter and asked His Father for direction, the word that came to Jesus was what He quoted to overcome.

While we are called to study the whole "Logos" (written) word of God, we find the life of God in obeying the "Rhema" word (voice) or that portion of scripture which the Holy Spirit quickens to our spirit and calls us to act on. Jesus demonstrated this first principle of a holy life clearly and acted out this lifestyle.

Every believer will be tempted at some point to be self-centered and use the skills and abilities God has given to provide bread or a living for oneself and ones family apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit. This temptation is also a test by Almighty God as to whether we will trust in Him and cry out to Him in prayer. Jesus understood that His Father, who provided miraculously for the children of Israel, could provide for Him in the desert. Jesus did not use His power to prove that he was the Son of God. He knew God's word was true that had been spoken over Him seven weeks earlier. Jesus did not doubt.

Jesus lived by the word that He had been given and used the scriptures to overcome Satan.

You Shall Not Tempt the Lord Your God

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" Matthew 4:5-7

The second temptation demonstrates the power and cunning of our enemy. He had the ability to supernaturally transport Jesus and himself to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. Realizing Jesus was well versed in the scriptures and probably had been praying and singing Psalm 91, Satan quoted the Psalm and encouraged Jesus to demonstrate His faith in God's word.

Satan reasoned that surely God would keep His word to protect Jesus and that the angels would keep Him from hurting Himself. Jesus had complete faith in God's word, but this passage was being quoted to cause presumption not faith. There is often a thin line between presumption and faith related to the word of God. The key ingredient is waiting on God for clarity and confirmation. Satan's temptation is a spontaneous urging which requires a quick decision. He likes to tempt us to act on impulse. The Father does not lead us by impulse but allows us time to meditate and listen to the still small voice of the Spirit. It is almost always certain that acting on hasty impulse leads to sin.

The second temptation again questions the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and questions His faith in God's word. This indicates that the tempter will relentlessly call into question our understanding of who we are in Christ. We must hold onto God's declaration of truth as to who we are in Him for there is great power in being a Son of God by faith in Jesus. We must know who we are and stand firm against every scheme of the evil one as we press through the narrow gate.

Satan also tempted Jesus to visibly demonstrate His Sonship to a public crowd who no doubt would witness the spectacle below in the temple courtyard. Satan may have argued that a great man of God should have a grand entrance into ministry. The Father chose to have Jesus first preach in little Nazareth were the people would hate Him

and want to kill Him (see Luke 4:14-30). God's ways are higher than our ways.

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'" (Matthew 4:7) This scripture is in reference to the time when the nation of Israel was wandering from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim. They had seen ten miracles in Egypt, the Red Sea open, bitter water became sweet at Marah, and the glory of God appeared in a cloud by day, His glory shone in the fire by night and manna was falling from heaven daily.

They tempted the Lord saying, **"Is the Lord among us or not" (Exodus 17:7).** In essence they said, "We want a sign that God is still with us. Give us water or we'll stone you Moses. Give us water God or we won't follow you any more." They began to presume that they could manipulate and control God. They began to presume that they could do anything they wanted or say anything and that He had to provide for them. They had no fear of God. The arrogant unbelief displayed tempted God to kill them all. If Moses had not interceded for them, God would have killed them.

Satan tempts us to walk in pride. Instead of humbly waiting and depending on God for clear direction and timing, how often do believers launch out with a few Bible promises and expect God to show up and answer their "faith prayers"! Where is the line drawn between great exploits of faith and presumption?

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Faith bases action on the word of God confirmed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the administration of His timing. When it is time to move out by faith, we have "substance" and "evidence", the witness of the Spirit that is tangible to our spirits. If Satan can't stop us from our zeal to obey God's word, he will try to push us too far and tempt us to launch out ahead of God. This is the pride of life we can all fall into.

My wife Glenda and I lived in the inner cities of South Central Los Angeles and North St. Louis for many years. We were certain God called us to work among the urban poor in some of the most violent areas of Watts and Northsides' 8th district. But we regularly prayed for safety, securely locked our doors, required our staff to work in teams and seldom went into the housing projects after dark.

We prayed that God would protect us from violence and personal crimes, but we did not presume that He had to. We were not unwise with regard to safety procedures. We did not test God by demanding

He protect us no matter how foolishly we behaved. On the other hand, we didn't minister to the people from the suburbs either. We strongly believed that Jesus would have lived right among the people and God faithfully protected our children and us as we ministered in His name.

"Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they shall certainly not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it" (Numbers 14:22,23). We test or tempt God when we do not heed or obey His voice and we limit what He can do in our lives (see Psalm 78:41). We are not allowed to enter into the Promised Land where we possess our own souls and walk in our inheritance.

"Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (I Corinthians 10:9,10). Disobedience, mumbling and complaining against God allows the enemy to loose serpents and destroyers in our lives. All forms of pride and presumption are rebellion against God and "tempt" Him to allow us to suffer the consequences of our choices in the **"furnace of affliction"** (see Isaiah 48:10).

Jesus did not presume to test God by jumping off the high place. He did not hear God say to jump off. Jesus had no substance or evidence by the Spirit that He was to act in this manner. On the contrary, He heard the Holy Spirit say, "Don't tempt the Lord".

When we step out ahead of God and try to manipulate, control or force His hand, we operate in pride and God will oppose us. As Satan later moved through Peter, believers can quote scriptures and give all kinds of advice, rebukes and suggestions as to how we should live. However, we must stand before the judgment seat of Christ all by ourselves to answer for our lives. We must fear God and wait for clear confirmation of His words before launching out in a "leap of faith".

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-4

Jesus taught us by His model to be patient and not launch out in presumption. God is in no hurry when it comes to directing our lives.

He will work truth into our lives over many years and develop character slowly. We must be completely yielded to Him for the wisdom of His timing in all things even as Jesus was. To walk through the narrow gate, we must learn to walk by faith in the voice of God and His timing. We must never follow a stranger's voice or act on impulse.

Worship God and Serve Him Only

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Matthew 4:8-10

A stronger One bound Satan. Jesus had resisted every temptation and Satan could gain no place or power over Him. For thousands of years, Satan had made deals with men to give them kingdoms and power if they would worship him. Few were able to resist so great a temptation and most had fallen into idol worship for the sake of temporary riches.

Jesus now clearly recognized this "angel of light" as the devil himself. Knowing He was called to bear a cross and die for the sins of the world, Jesus would take no shortcut to authority or rule. He would fully and completely obey His Father even unto death on a cross. Jesus had a narrow path to follow and He was determined to walk through it.

Jesus declared the true path for every disciple. **"You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve".** We are called to be wholehearted lovers of God. Our lives must be consumed with passionate devotion to Christ alone. Anything that becomes the central focus in our lives becomes an idol which we worship or render due worth unto higher than Christ.

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. Matthew 4:11

The wilderness victory was complete, Satan left under direct orders of a stronger One and behold, faithful angels came and ministered to Jesus. This is a great encouragement to every believer who understands His position and authority in Christ. God will send His angels to minister life to us after we have overcome.

And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke 10:18,19

We have been given authority and power to live and walk as Jesus walked. As we overcome, God's angels will come and minister to us and renew our strength. What great love the Father has for us and what a glorious heritage to be called the children of God.

Bind the Strong Man and Plunder His Goods

And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house." Matthew 12:23-29

The public ministry of Jesus demonstrated that He had bound the strong man as He went about plundering His goods. But how did He bind the strong man and can we do the same today? Jesus bound the strong man by overcoming every temptation in the wilderness by using the word of God.

When Jesus said, **"Away with you Satan!"** the enemy was bound. Satan had no area of darkness in Jesus' heart to rule. Satan was completely subject to Jesus' ministry on earth and was helpless to stop anything Jesus planned to do. Although Satan worked through the Pharisees and Romans to crucify Jesus on the cross, this was all part of the Father's plan and Jesus chose to lay down His life.

The pathway of the narrow gate will eventually lead the Church to overcome Satan. We must grow so that we can bind the strong man and plunder His goods. We must follow the model and example of Jesus exactly as we go through life.

The wilderness experience is essential to developing the Christ-like character to overcome Satan. The wilderness, as supervised by the Holy Spirit, will expose our fear, unbelief, carnal behavior and greater need for God's revelation and Spirit. If we remain in unbelief, we will die in the wilderness as so many of God's people have throughout the ages. Our passion must be to go through the narrow gate in the footsteps of Jesus and enter into our Promised Land by faith in Him. The most glorious ministry of all times awaits all those who go through the wilderness into fruit bearing ministry.

Jesus character was tested and tried throughout His earthly life. The inner life and nature of Jesus enabled Him to overcome all tests. We must develop the same inner life that Jesus had in order to measure up to His standard and glorify the Father. In our next chapter, we will look closely at the heart standards of Jesus that the Holy Spirit will produce in us as we journey through the narrow gate.

CHAPTER 10 – CONFORMING TO THE HEART OF JESUS

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. II Corinthians 3:18

As we praise and worship God and focus intently on Him, the Holy Spirit unveils our face to behold the glory of Jesus Christ. As we behold His glory by revelation, the impartation of that revelation transforms us into that same image. As we walk the pathway of the narrow gate, we behold the heart of Jesus and conform our hearts to His by the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

The Father longs that we have a heart nature like the Son that fears Him and obeys His every commandment (Deuteronomy 5:29). He promised to put a new heart in believers one day so that they could walk pure and holy before Him (Ezekiel 36:26-29). His promises were fulfilled in Christ to give us a new heart so that our inward nature could become just like Jesus. **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).**

God has given us a new heart through faith in Christ Jesus and we have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in our human temples. There is a sanctification process that we must go through to conform our hearts to the heart of Jesus. This process includes repenting and believing as we have stated earlier. It includes putting off the old ways and putting on the new. The narrow gate pathway requires that we behold the glory of the Lord by the revelation of the Spirit on the word. We must set the intent of our heart daily to behold Jesus and conform our hearts to His. This will lead us to ultimately measure up to the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ.

The holy, living word of God is the supernatural seed of God that enables Christ to be formed in the good soil of the receptive human heart. It is possible to read the scriptures without receiving any revelation by the Spirit. One can memorize the word and not receive the impartation of the divine nature. All of God's word must be taught to us by the Holy Spirit and planted in our hearts by His powerful ministry.

The word is to be the bread of life to nourish us and form Christ in us. Bread is made up of flour, water, oil, yeast and seasoning. It must be mixed together properly, kneaded and allowed to rise before baking in the oven. For the word of God to become the nutritional bread of life,

we need to add the water and oil of the Spirit through worship, praise and prayer, especially in tongues. The word must be mixed together for a season, kneaded and allowed to rise in the heart. Then the word of faith must be tested by fire for a season. Trials and tribulations are the fiery oven that will heat up the bread and cause it to become edible. When the bread is cooked in our hearts, it will have tremendous fragrance and nutritional value as the fresh bread of heaven. The bread of life in our hearts forms Christ in us and is useful to serve others the fresh bread that comes from heaven.

The following heart issues have cooked in my oven for a long season, and they are becoming my nature by the presence of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to take time to meditate on these scriptures and behold the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ so that you can be conformed to His image. As you do, you will be progressing through the narrow gate.

Love God with all Your Heart

Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment." Matthew 22:37-38

Jesus loved the Father with all His heart. Every heart affection of Jesus was turned completely to pleasing His Father in every aspect of His daily life. Jesus' heart, soul and mind was focused on loving the Father every day. Jesus loved the Father with all His energy and gave everything He had to do His will. We must conform to His image.

The Lord has given us a new heart through faith in Christ Jesus so that we could conform to the image of Jesus from within. We have the nature of Christ within us to love the Father as Jesus did. We must behold the love of Jesus and receive the impartation of the divine nature as He proclaims His name into our spirits.

And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them. John 17:26

God is love. The name of God reflects His essential nature. As we hear the revelation of His name in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father, which He loved Jesus with, is imparted into our hearts. Christ is formed in our hearts and we become full of His love, mercy, grace, truth and righteousness.

The Bible is full of the names of God reflecting aspects of His glory. Jesus proclaims the name of His Father: Jehovah, the self-existent creator, Jehovah-Jire, the good provider, Jehovah-Rophe, the Lord our healer, Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord our peace, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord our victorious banner, Jehovah Tsaba, the Lord of hosts and captain of the armies of heaven. There are many aspects of the divine nature (name) of God the Holy Spirit will speak into our hearts as He forms Christ within us.

The revelation of His name awakens our heart to love Him more and imparts to us the divine nature of His love. As a result, our passionate desire is to know Him more intimately as a bride longs for her bridegroom. Then we can join in the romance of the Song of Solomon with our Heavenly Bridegroom. **"I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (Song of Solomon 7:10).** Our hearts must be completely given to Jesus in passionate love as He gave His heart to the Father.

Compassionate Love for People

And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:39

Jesus' heart is full of compassion and love for everyone. During His earthly ministry, Jesus loved everyone He came in contact with. He loved the multitudes, the rich, the poor, the businessman and the beggar. He even loved the Pharisees and had mercy in His heart toward them. As we behold the heart of Jesus, we must pray that the Father fill us with His compassionate nature.

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Matthew 9:36

Jesus has compassion for the nations. He cares for the weary, the homeless and the struggling souls on Earth. Jesus longs to heal the sick because of His compassion (Matthew 14:14). His compassion led Him to miraculously provide food for the multitudes (Matthew 15:32ff). Compassion ministry is to heal the blind eyes and touch lepers with miraculous power (Matthew 20:34; Mark 1:41). Jesus' compassion led Him to raise the dead (Luke 7:13).

Jesus' compassion was so great that He willingly chose to endure crucifixion to take the punishment for our sins. He laid down His life

for us proving His own word. **"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).** Jesus sacrificed His life in perfect compassion for the whole world. The revelation of His nature and the virtue of His sacrifice on the cross inspired the apostle Paul to walk in the miraculous works of Jesus.

For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. I Corinthians 2:2-5

Paul focused on the compassion and mercy of Jesus shown on the cross. As He determined to know only Jesus and His sacrificial love, it imparted the love of God into Paul's heart so that he could lay down His life for the Corinthians. Paul was once a proud Pharisee with a hardened heart, but God transformed his heart to become like Jesus. Every heart affection and all our energy must be focused on loving God and beholding His love demonstrated in the cross of Christ.

It is the nature of God to give His life for the people He loves. As we grow to understand His perfect love for us, we gain confidence, trust and willingness to run after Him even more, knowing that in His goodness, He will give us everything we need (Romans 8:32). As we receive deeper measures of His love, we will love one another as He loved us. Jesus gave us the new commandment to love one another as He loved us (John 13:34). We must continually focus on His love for us so we can love others as He loves us. The entire law is fulfilled in love.

Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, I Timothy 1:5

Paul understood that God's purpose in teaching us His word was that we would love from a pure heart and have a clean conscience and true faith. Many study the word of God diligently by intellect alone and become harsh religious critics of every move of the Spirit and of everyone that does not agree with them. I was once somewhat of a Pharisee in this way. This is a religion of the mind and not a relationship in the heart. The goal of all doctrine should be to produce pure love in our hearts as we behold the name of God and His glory. If our doctrine does not produce passionate love for God and compassioned love for people including miraculous healing, we need

to go back to the cross and behold Jesus some more. The life of love for God and compassion for people is the fruit we should look for in our lives and especially in prophets.

Abandoned to Obey the Holy Spirit

Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel….. I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 5:19,20,30 NASV

Jesus abandoned Himself to obey the Holy Spirit in everything. He was so focused on doing the Father's will that He had no desire to step into self-will. Jesus became so locked into obeying the Spirit that He rightly said, **"I can do nothing on My own initiative".** Although Jesus was tempted to operate in selfish pursuits, there was nothing in His heart that would empower Him to act independent of His Father and the will of the Holy Spirit. We must behold Jesus and become like Him.

When God called me to resign my position as executive director of our mission's conference center in 1997, I determined to only do what the Holy Spirit showed me. I set my heart to walk as Jesus walked only doing what I saw the Father doing. I determined not to do anything on my own initiative and started to pray and seek the Lord.

Unfortunately, I had two major problems. My spirit man was so underdeveloped by years of religiosity that I could not see. I was spiritually blind. The other problem was that I could not hear the voice of the Lord very well. This led to an extreme wilderness crying out to God day and night as the blind beggar Bartimaeus (see Mark 10:46-52). I prayed Bartimaeus' prayer, "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" day after day for many months. I still pray that prayer.

God began answering that prayer by opening my eyes to all the sin in my life that He wanted to remove. I've gone through years of repentance and believing as the Lord has unveiled my eyes to see Jesus and where I was out of agreement with Him. By God's grace, I am growing to be completely unable to operate apart from the abiding

presence of the Holy Spirit. When I start to step out of God's will, spiritual sirens go off in my heart and I can become completely dysfunctional.

Early on in my wilderness of seeking the Lord, I felt to apply for a position where a major visitation of the Spirit was occurring. As a former executive director, I had adequate administrative skills. However, when I tried to fill out a resume, I became a bumbling idiot. I could not get my hands to type the resume and I was having all kinds of trouble. I was so new at following the Holy Spirit that I did not realize at first it was the Lord signaling me that I had left His path of peace.

The Lord is looking for disciples who will become like His servant David and not like Saul. **"And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will'" (Acts 13:22-23 underlining mine).** David wanted to know the intimate heartfelt emotions of the Father. David was a worshipper who loved God with all His heart. David was an amazing man who struggled greatly with his inner fallen nature. Even though David was not born again, He set His heart to do all of God's will. Like all of us, David did some of His own will that was not pleasing to God.

When David disobeyed God and was convicted by the Spirit, he repented and wept before the Lord with godly sorrow (see Psalm 51). Jesus never needed to repent for His own sins, but did not hesitate to call Himself the Son of David. When we sin, God looks for a broken and contrite heart of repentance that He will not despise. God will quickly restore us to the pathway of abandonment to the Holy Spirit.

A Pure Heart

Jesus said, **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).** God wants us to have a pure heart that only does the will of God. A pure heart comes as we set our heart intent daily on pleasing the Father in all things as Jesus did. As our heart is delivered from selfish motivations, carnal lusts and worldly entanglements, we will begin to see God and His will for us. I have grown over the last years to see God clearly in His word as I have gone through many times of repentance and receiving greater impartation.

A pure heart is completely set apart unto God. A pure heart is holy. A pure heart has an unveiled mind to see life as God sees it. Jesus'

heart was perfectly pure and holy and God expects us to conform to His heart. **"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (I Peter 1:15,16).** God calls His children to be separate from the world in order to be holy priests unto Him. We must embrace the Spirit of burning and of judgment to cleanse us from all unholiness (see Isaiah 4). As we repent of unholiness in the fire of God, the Holy Spirit will wash us with the word of God to make us pure and spotless before the Lord Jesus.

Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27

The word of God, when taught by the Holy Spirit, has the incredible power to cut out sin and impart the nature of Christ's sanctified life. As this process develops in the hungry heart that loves God and guards his heart against all other affections, pure Christ-like character develops that enables us to walk in our glorious inheritance.

Glorify the Father in all Things

He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. John 7:18

And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him. John 8:29

Jesus lived His life on earth to glorify the Father and always did those things that pleased Him. Our created purpose is to conform our hearts to Jesus and live every day to the glory and praise of God our Father. We must live every day to please the Father as Jesus did. When a person seeks personal fame, recognition, affirmation, glory, prestige, and promotes himself, he or she will get into agreement with Satan who desires to be worshipped above the most high God.

Jesus never spoke from Himself independent of the Father's will. Jesus never uttered an idle word. He obeyed every commandment, even unto death on a cross, in order to please the Father.

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His

sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. I John 3:22-23

John understood the authority in prayer gained as he conformed his heart to Jesus. When we keep God's commandments and always do those things that are pleasing in His sight, the Lord hears our prayers and answers them. God commands us to believe in Jesus and love one another. When we obey Him, we glorify the Father.

The Lord also calls us to glorify Him with good works done in His name. **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).** Jesus did many good works to glorify the Father. Those works included preaching, teaching, healings, deliverances, miracles, confronting the religious leaders and equipping disciples. Jesus always gave all the glory to His Father for everything He did. He called them the works of the Father (John 10:37,38). We are to do the same works as Jesus and greater works as we believe in Him and obey His voice (John 14:12-14).

A Heart of Mercy

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. Luke 23:34

Jesus' heart, filled with mercy, compelled Him to petition the Father to forgive those who murdered Him. He knew that the punishment for killing the Son of God would be extreme and He loved His enemies. Jesus commands us to do the same.

But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. Luke 6:27-28

In order to love our enemies under persecution and trial, we must have our hearts filled with the tender mercies of God. Mercy is the extension of undeserved kindness, forgiveness and grace. As we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, the enemy will resist us through religious people who will accuse and assault us. If we allow our hearts to get into woundedness and bitterness, we will become just like the Pharisees. We must guard our hearts from bitterness at all costs (Proverbs 4:23).

Jesus spoke directly to the religious crowd, **"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13).** The Lord commands us to go and learn about His mercy. He desires that our hearts be full of mercy. Just as the mercy seat was the place where God's glory came in the tabernacle, God wants to fill our hearts with His glory. He will only bring His glory into the heart of mercy. Jesus had a perfect heart of mercy and the glory of God flowed through Him to minister His life to the people.

A Heart Like a Child

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:2-5

A small child in a healthy home is a model of humility, trust and teachability. God wants our hearts to be humble like a little child. This speaks to us of our utter dependence upon God for everything. Jesus lived in complete dependence upon His Father and never acted by His own strength in anything. We are to be converted to become like humble children.

A humble heart does not worry about tomorrow, but trusts in the Lord for all things. We are called to have a deep trust in the Lord in every aspect of our hearts (Proverbs 3:5,6). We are not to rely on our own natural reason and understanding but rather seek an intimate relationship with Jesus and walk in agreement with Him at all times.

A healthy child is eager to learn new things and does not resist in pride when being instructed by a parent or teacher. We must develop a teachable spirit to receive the word of God planted in the good soil of our hearts (Luke 8:15). Even though I have studied for many years, I long to learn more and pray that I may have the heart of a child.

God wants us to have a teachable heart that welcomes correction. **"Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid" (Proverbs 12:1).** The pure heart of a child who receives instruction from spiritual parents will be delivered from many sins. It is foolish to refuse instruction and correction from the Lord and from spiritual leaders. God calls us to trust in our spiritual

leaders and obediently submit to them as a humble child would his parents (Hebrews 13:17).

The submissive, teachable obedient child of God will become great in the kingdom of heaven according to Jesus. God flows His grace to the humble and it is wise to earnestly seek correction and the instruction of the Lord and His leadership.

A Gentle and Humble Heart

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus is gentle and humble in heart. He calls us to come to Him in perfect submission and learn the walk of perfect agreement. There is work to do in the kingdom of God and it is only possible to do the works of the Father by being yoked with Jesus. The One who is gentle and humble in heart will flow His nature to us as we behold Him and walk with Him.

People get burdened with many heavy yokes when they walk apart from Jesus. Fleshly lusts wage war against their souls (I Peter 2:11). The soul man is not capable of doing the work of the spirit man and gets burdened down with anxiety, stress, discouragement and depression when operating apart from Jesus. Many have tried to walk unyoked to Jesus and have come into great weariness of heart.

Once we are yoked with Jesus by submitting our wills to Him, we can rest assured that the Good Shepherd will take care of all of our needs. The work will not be easy, but the joy of fellowship with Him is worth the effort. The more we conform our heart to the heart of Jesus, the closer we will be in agreement with Him. Walking in agreement with Jesus leads to a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

A Heart Full of Faith

Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” John 6:28,29

The Holy Spirit led my wife and I out of full time ministry, with pay, into a barren wilderness of unemployment without pay. The Lord called me to wait on Him in prayer for everything and I began to pray in the Spirit and seek Him as a full time job. Many times, I asked the Lord what work He wanted me to do. The Lord spoke to me from John 6:29 that I was to believe in Him. He basically told me that believing was my "job description".

After twenty-one years of missionary service, I thought I already believed in God and protested that I did believe. He calmly replied, "You don't believe enough!" The Lord is always right of course and the fire of the next years exposed the unbelief in my heart. God led me to pray in tongues many hours each day and devote myself to studying the word only as the Holy Spirit gave me leading. Eventually the Lord led me to begin writing books and has given me a unique ministry.

When you walk abandoned to the Holy Spirit, He will expose your heart to areas that need to change. We repent before the Lord and seek His cleansing power so that we have no unrighteousness left in us. But He also wants to impart His life-giving faith to fill our temples. Since faith comes by hearing the word (Rhema – voice) of God, we must devote ourselves to prayer so that our eyes and ears may be opened to see and hear God's revelation. Then we must act on the revelation by the Spirit in perfect obedience.

All the newly gained ground of faith goes through a fiery testing period so that our faith may not fail in future adversity. A heart full of faith is pleasing to the Father since without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). The heart only receives true faith by revelation of the word by the Spirit. Intellectual knowledge of the Bible does not produce genuine faith. Speaking a verse out loud thousands of time with enthusiasm will not produce faith unless the Holy Spirit drops the word into your spirit and opens up the revelation.

The best way I have found to grow in faith is to completely abandon myself everyday to the Holy Spirit. Some days He leads me to worship and pray in tongues. Other days, the Spirit leads me to study, study and more study. On days like today, He has me write, write, write. No two days are alike.

Following the Spirit is like a sailor searching for the wind on the sea. In order to move efficiently in sailing, one must find the ideal wind conditions. The experienced sailor watches the waves, the clouds and

the various patterns of the sea. When he finds the wind conditions most favorable to sailing, he sets out on that course.

Discerning the wind of the Holy Spirit is similar to this. We must watch and pray to observe which way the Spirit is moving. He may be moving in a different direction every day for the one called to walk with Him. Following the wind and moving of the Spirit will lead to an increase in hearing the voice of God so that you can obey His voice and grow in faith.

As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:30-32

Jesus wants us to abide in His word and be saturated with the truth taught by the Holy Spirit. In order to fill our hearts full of faith, we must fill our minds with the truth of His word and pray in the Spirit so that it flows into our spirits. The word is the sword of the Holy Spirit that sets us free from flesh issues. The word is our offensive weapon against all the wiles of the devil. As our hearts are full of faith in the word of God, we will not be deceived by the false words of the enemy.

Jesus filled His heart from childhood with faith in God's word. We are called to study God's word by the Holy Spirit and accurately handle His word. We must heed Solomon's admonition, **"My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:20-23).**

A Joyful Heart

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:18-21

Jesus' heart was filled with joy as He served His Father. Even during the crucifixion, Jesus had His heart set on the joy set before Him that millions would be saved from destruction (Hebrews 12:2).

A joyful heart is good medicine and gives us strength to endure difficult times. It brings healing to the body and refreshment to the bones (Proverbs 17:22; Nehemiah 8:10). As we worship and delight in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our heart, because our heart will be filled with Him (Psalm 37:4).

God calls us to rejoice and shout for joy in His abundant goodness and incredible salvation. Rejoicing and delighting in God opens the spirit man and releases anointing that brings life to people. Depressed people have closed spirits and rarely reach out to anyone.

God gave my wife Glenda and I an extraordinary son named Jonathan. He is the most joyful person we've ever known. He walks in the light of God's glory and radiates joy and excitement everywhere he goes. Jonathan's 760 senior classmates voted him the most humorous student because of his extreme joy. He has more friends than anyone I've known. People love to be around Jonathan and young children love to play with Him. Jonathan is a fountain of joy and has exuberance and faith that is astounding.

God has given him a gift to pray for people and bring them into joy. Jonathan was once asked to pray for an older man who was very depressed. Jonathan laid his hands on the respectable man's head and began messing up his hair singing a jingle from the Billy Bass fish-on-the-wall thing. After ten minutes of singing, "don't worry, be happy" and other silly songs, the man broke into uproarious laughter and great joy. He loved Jonathan and thanked him profusely. It turned out that four days prior, the man's brother had committed suicide and a deep depression had set in.

Joy is a great blessing from the Lord and it is impossible to follow Jesus very far with sorrow and sadness. There are many difficult things that assault us as we press into the kingdom of God, but we are called to serve the Lord with gladness. As the joy of the Lord fills our hearts through an abundance of worship and praise, the radiance of His life will shine wherever we go.

As we pass through the wilderness tests and develop the heart character of Jesus, the Lord will release the anointing of His inheritance into our lives so that we can do the works that Jesus did. Those greater works are the fruit of all the ages of church history in the last days. We will look closely at those works in our next chapter.

CHAPTER 11 – WALK IN THE WORKS OF THE FATHER

Then Jesus returned <u>in the power of the Spirit</u> to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. Luke 4:14 underlining mine

Jesus modeled walking through the narrow gate as He completely obeyed the Holy Spirit in all things. After being filled with the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River, Jesus was led into the wilderness where He fasted and prayed and overcame the devil. Returning from the wilderness, Luke noted that Jesus was now flowing in the "power" of the Holy Spirit. As we mature in Christ, obey the Holy Spirit and overcome the enemy, the Lord will enable us to flow in His power also.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. Acts 10:38

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. All Christians have been anointed with the Holy Spirit at some level but few have been anointed with His power. We lack power because of our immaturity and unbelief. As we travel the pathway of the narrow gate, the Holy Spirit will lead us into maturity and faith and anoint us with His power. Then we will be able to do the works of the Father including healing all who are oppressed by the devil.

Teaching, Preaching, Healing and Delivering

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Matthew 4:23-24

The full measure of Christ flowing into the mature Church will enable His body to teach, preach, heal and deliver multitudes just as He did. While not every person will be called to be a stadium evangelist, we must experience the anointing of God to enable us to reach large groups of people by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we start walking in the healing and deliverance ministry that Jesus walked in, the crowds will gather over night as they did for Him.

Jesus taught in their synagogues as one having authority. He traveled to various cities within Israel and ministered in the appropriate meeting houses to the lost sheep of Israel. Jesus also preached in the open fields, on mountain tops and while sitting in a boat on the lake.

Jesus continuously preached the gospel of the kingdom. This included His teaching on the narrow gate, the sermon on the mount and His parables. Jesus accurately taught that the pathway of salvation was difficult and that only a few would find it. Jesus demanded that those who would become His disciples deny themselves, take up their crosses daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23,24). The anointing on Jesus preaching was tremendous and He always made His demands clear to the people. Jesus never lowered the threshold to make sinners feel comfortable. He never compromised His standards to widen the gate for those He loved. Jesus spoke the absolute truth in love at all times and in all places. He was uncompromising as He preached the gospel of the kingdom to the multitudes and to small groups.

Jesus walked in the works of the Father by healing all kinds of sicknesses and diseases. Anyone who came to Jesus for prayer was healed. The healing anointing that flowed through Jesus is our birthright as sons of God through faith in Him. As we mature as sons, we will walk in the works that He did and greater. There are many sick and diseased people who need us to grow up quickly!

There were no demonized people too bound up for Jesus to release by the anointing of power that was on Him. Epileptics were set free along with paralytics and the mentally ill. The Gadarene demonic was bound up with a host of demons that drove 2,000 pigs into the sea once loosed. This unfortunate man dwelt naked among the tombs and was a well-known raving madman. Jesus spoke a word and the man was set free from every unclean spirit that tormented him.

Satan Himself could not stand before Jesus or get Him out of agreement with the Father or the Holy Spirit. No principality, power, spiritual force or confederacy of demons can maintain their ground when the mature Son of God arrives. We are the sons of God now and we must mature and walk in the same delivering power of Jesus so the multitudes of demonized may be free.

We have been contending for years at our church for the anointing of power to set mentally ill people free from their demonic tormentors. In order to gain the authority over a disease or devil, we have to follow the Holy Spirit into intercession and personal character development along with impartations of holy faith. We are getting extremely close to a break through in this area and have been

wrestling these evil spirits for some months now. We have faith that as we keep knocking in prayer, the Lord will open the door and release this bread of healing to touch the needy.

Walk in Miracles, Signs and Wonders

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know. Acts 2:22

The Father authenticated the message of Jesus by miracles, signs and wonders done in the midst of many people. Jesus raised the dead, cleansed lepers, raised up cripples, stilled the storms, multiplied food, changed water into wine, walked on water and rose from the dead. Jesus walked in the works of the Father.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:30-31 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen. John 21:25

Jesus performed so many miracles, signs, wonders and “other things” that John doubted that the whole world would could contain the books that could be written about Him. The mature Church will walk in the miraculous power of God to perform miracles, signs and wonders of greater magnitude than Jesus as He promised (see John 14:12-14). These miracles will be done to point people to Jesus so that they perhaps might respond to the gospel of the kingdom by repenting of sins and believing in His perfect life and vicarious sacrifice.

Disciple the Faithful and Impart Life and Power to Them

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Matthew 10:1-2

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. II Timothy 2:2

A central component of Jesus' ministry was to disciple faithful individuals and equip them to reach others with the gospel of His kingdom. While we are to reach the masses, God calls us to invest heavily in the faithful disciples so that leaders are raised up to lead the Church in the next generation.

Jesus wants us to disciple men and women, boys and girls who love the Lord. There is no gender bias in the heart of God. Jesus' death and resurrection broke down the gender barriers the fall brought in. Male and females who place their faith in Christ Jesus and walk by the Spirit qualify to be sons of God (Galatians 3:26-28). Mature "sons" access the inheritance of God. Faithful women can attain the position of mature sons and will not be denied their inheritance by the Father because of gender.

God created man, male and female together, in His likeness so that they could exercise righteous dominion on earth through the power of loving, holy agreement (Genesis 1:26-28). God commanded **"them"** to fill the earth and subdue it. God said that it was not good for man, Adam, the representative head, to be alone in his leadership responsibilities (Genesis 2:18). Adam could not fulfill God's command to exercise dominion with out Eve. Eve had vital aspects of God's life in her that Adam needed to be able to function as a faithful son of God (Luke 3:38). The fall of Adam and Eve caused a great rift in gender relations that God is now reconciling through the cross of Jesus and the revelation of His Spirit.

In order for the Church of Jesus Christ to be fruitful, multiply and walk in the benevolent dominion that God has always intended, "she" must allow anointed women called by God to enter into full partnership at every level of Church government, ministry and leadership. God is no respecter of persons and offers salvation as a free gift to all who truly believe (Acts 10:34,35). His Spirit is being poured out on all flesh and especially women (Joel 2:28,29). Believing men and women are part of the bride and body of Christ. They are the temple of the living God. God is going to raise up an army of last day women five-fold ministers with a message to the nations (Psalm 68:11 NASB).

God calls us to invest in the faithful. Faithful women out number men in the Church by at least five to one. God is raising up worshippers and intercessors who devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word by the Spirit. It appears obvious to me that more women than men will walk in the works of the Father in the last days.

Just as Jesus appeared to women first after His resurrection and gave them a message to take to His male disciples (Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1,2,11-18), Jesus is rising up in this "third day" to speak to women and give them a commission in every aspect of five-fold ministry. I already invest a great deal of my equipping ministry into faithful women who fast, pray and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. They are powerful intercessors who will birth last-day moves of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had many women followers who are the only persons noted to have supported Him financially (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus prayed for and laid hands on women, which was unheard of for a Rabbi of His time (Luke 13:10-17). Jesus allowed women to minister to Him and would not turn the faithful woman away (John 12:3). The disciples who rejected the resurrection testimony of the women were rebuked for their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 16:12-15).

I know many more women than men who are running hard after God and are abandoned to the Holy Spirit. I bless all you women and welcome you as full partners in all aspects of Christian ministry and Church government. And I challenge you men to rise up and start running and learn from the women!

Confront the Religious Pharisees and Endure Persecution

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. John 8:44

Jesus stood in the face of the religious Pharisees many times and blistered them with hard wake-up-call words. They didn't wake up. They hated Him all the more. Jesus did avoid confrontations with the religious as the Spirit led Him, but He also stood powerfully against their hypocrisy and exposed their lawlessness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to

men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Matthew 23:25-29

Jesus' verbal attack against the Pharisees was relentless as He set His face like flint to go to the cross. His righteous indignation exposed their venomous rage. His confrontations brought their murderous hearts out from behind their religious robes. As we walk in the works of the Father, He will call us to have a zeal for His house that will consume us with fire towards those who would turn it into a den of robbers for personal merchandising. Walking in the works of the Father will get many of us killed in the last days.

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. John 15:20

Jesus confronted the religious leaders of His day on many occasions. He was direct and bold in dealing with their wicked hypocrisy. We are called to be like Him. As we confront the religious leaders of our day, we will have to endure their persecution just as Jesus did. The mature Church will stand against religiosity and overcome all persecution even unto death.

Cleanse the House of God with Violent Action

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Matthew 21:12-13

The Church has become polluted with materialism and controlling leaders who would keep the Holy Spirit, represented by the doves in cages, under their control. It will require violent prophetic and apostolic action to cleanse the house of God from the carnality we have in the Church today.

All lawless people in churches must be called to repent or be put out of the church. This violent action must take place so that God can come and manifest His presence in our midst. Greedy, sensual pastors must not be followed. The Lord is going to bring His fire and cleanse His house. Are you willing to take His seven Spirits of fire in your belly and go?

Love One Another as Christ Loved Us

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34,35

God is love and we must demonstrate maturity in loving one another as Christ loved us. Critical spirits must flee. All jealousy, selfish ambition and carnal darkness will disappear in the light of His glorious love shinning through His people.

Demonic spirits of offense, faultfinding and accusation will try to slither they way into the holy house of God. We must unconditionally love through every trial and lay down our lives for one another.

Minister to the Nations

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. Matthew 28:19-20

The great commission must be fulfilled by anointed overcomers who walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we go in fellowship with Jesus Christ, He will enable us to disciple leaders throughout the nations so His kingdom will be advanced until He returns.

We will need to earnestly contend with the Lord and discover the revelation for the wealth transfer in order to disciple the nations. It will cost billions of dollars for missionaries and materials to get the job done in the last day harvests that are coming. The Lord is already teaching us a great deal on kingdom finances that is radically different from the old “prosperity preachers” that I have heard.

God will flow His wealth to mature sons, who obey His voice, through their rights of inheritance. He will entrust extraordinary amounts of money to those who are completely dead to mammon’s power. Words of wisdom will flow to the faithful spirit-filled believers who follow the Spirit’s pathway to the pool of blessing. Those words of wisdom will give believers the anointing of God’s wisdom that Solomon walked in. Only those who traverse the narrow gate pathway will qualify for this anointing.

Zeal for the Father's House and His Gifts of Power

Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." John 2:17

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
I Corinthians 14:1

We must grow up into the zeal of God for His house and the gifts needed to build His house. We must walk by faith and not by sight. God has called us to be faithful in stewardship in all areas as we zealously seek to follow His ways. We will need to meditate on His word day and night to be successful at this level (Joshua 1:8,9).

Zeal comes by the impartation of the spirit of burning and judgment (Isaiah 4). Zeal is the holy jealous passion of God to prepare a pure and spotless bride to the everlasting Son. God's zeal imparts the seven fires of the Holy Spirit to burn all pride an carnality out of the believer. The zeal of God will supernaturally empower men and women to cleanse the Church of all compromise, merchandising and doctrines of demons. The fire is on the way!

But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 15:24

Jesus knew the boundaries of God's call on His life and stayed within them. Each of us will be given specific assignments from the Lord. We are called to be faithful to the will of God revealed for us and not be carried away by fleshly zeal. God does not give us grace to do things He is not calling us to do. His perfect will is challenging enough and will enable us to advance His kingdom in His way in His time by His Spirit.

Prophetic Teaching

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. Matthew 24:3-5

The mature bride will have understanding of the scriptures at a high prophetic level so as to teach others about the signs of the times. We will release revelation that is absolutely relevant for daily life during

extremely difficult times that will come upon the earth in the last days.

But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Matthew 10:19-20

The Father will release extraordinary spontaneous prophetic preaching to those who walk through the narrow gate. Stephen was given a message by unction of the Father in response to religious persecution (Acts 7). Although it cost Stephen his life, his blood was shed at the feet of a persecutor named Saul who could not hide from the convicting power of that anointing. Saul was met by the lightning strike of Jesus' appearance and became the greatest missionary apostle of all times.

Under the prophetic preaching anointing, God's word will go forth with great power and it will not return to Him without producing the desired result.

Embrace the Prophets and Apostles of God Today

Therefore the wisdom of God also said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute". Luke 11:49

The Lord is building His church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Jesus walked in all five office gifts and gives the office gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the Church so she can be edified and equipped to walk in the full measure of His stature (Ephesians 4:11-16). In order for five-fold leaders to equip saints to walk like Jesus, they must first break through to that level in their own lives by the power of the Holy Spirit and faithful obedience.

Lay Down Your Life in Sacrificial Love

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. John 15:13

The greatest work of Jesus was to willingly lay down His life in love for others. He despised the shame and with joy set before Him, Jesus embraced the cross. He calls us to take up our cross daily and follow

Him. God is love and we must allow His love to penetrate our hearts to the max so that we can give everything to serve Him in this last dark hour that is coming.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:11-12

Many will be called to lay down their lives in martyrdom in the last days and not give into compromise to save their lives. This powerful obedience unto death will be used by God to overcome the enemy and ultimately Jesus will come back to punish His enemies and establish His kingdom in full rule on earth.

For most believers, the pathway of the narrow gate ultimately leads to physical death on earth, many at the hands of sinful men. We must willing to die daily and pay the ultimate price if called upon. The Lord showed me many years ago that I would be martyred and He has confirmed it twice. My wife dreamed that we were both martyred in our old age with gray hair.

The dream has been a source of great encouragement and faith to me since I get assaulted by all kinds of things in the meantime. I occasionally will say something like, “I can’t die yet, I have to be martyred in my old age”. I pray that I would so thoroughly follow the pathway of the narrow gate that I could be counted worthy to lay down my life for Jesus. Meanwhile, I pray that I can do the works of the Father and destroy a great deal of the devil’s kingdom rescuing souls from his evil grasp.

CHAPTER 12 – WALKING THROUGH THE NARROW GATE

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, <u>for His seed remains in him</u>; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. I John 3:8-10 (underlining mine)

The living seed of Christ comes into those who walk through the narrow gate. The impartation of the divine seed of God at salvation has the entire DNA of the Son of God in it. Walking the pathway of the narrow gate nurtures that seed to maturity so that the one born of God becomes like Jesus and does not sin. Through a sanctification process of repenting and believing, all that remains in the believer's heart is the pure seed of the nature of Christ. Jesus is the living word of God, the holy seed that is planted in our hearts. The pure seed of God's word sown by the Spirit grows in a heart of good soil and bears the fruit of Christlikeness. This must be the goal of every Christian!

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:15

Jesus Christ is the promised seed of Eve who bruised the head of Satan and his seed seen in the Pharisees and the sons of darkness. Eve's seed is also a prophetic picture of the Church who is the holy seed of God, the body and bride of Jesus Christ. The Lord will empower us to destroy the works of the devil even though the devil will bruise our heel. The heel prophetically speaks of the feet in the body of Christ. The holy apostles and prophets through the ages are the foundation (feet) of the body of Christ. All of Christ's original apostles were murdered except John who suffered imprisonment on Patmos. The religious seed of Satan killed many Old Testament prophets. Apostles and prophets of the last days will also suffer the greatest bruising in the development of the kingdom of God as they walk through the narrow gate. Jesus told us the way was difficult!

Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham through Whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Jesus Christ is the seed of David whose throne shall be established forever (II Samuel 7:12,13). Going through the narrow gate, we also become the seed of Eve,

Abraham and David for we are in Christ and He is in us. All of the promises made to the Seed are our inheritance as well.

A natural seed is a grossly inadequate picture of what the full-grown seed will become. An acorn does not depict the beauty of a mature oak tree by a river. An apple seed does not do justice to the beauty of a blossoming apple tree in spring. The seed of Christ in our hearts and the lives we live on earth are a poor picture indeed of the glories that await us. As God's seed, we also will have to fall into the earth and die to ourselves so that the resurrection life of Jesus can move through us. What we are to become in glory is far more extraordinary than anything we have seen in the seed of this life.

There is a profound prophetic blessing in understanding the law of the seed and operating by it. We must embrace the truth that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7,8). When we sow to the Spirit through worship, sowing the word of God into our hearts, and obeying God's voice, we will reap a glorious blessing. Our whole life on earth is forming the DNA of the seed that will be birthed in the eternal kingdom of heaven. Imagine being able to fashion the future glory that you will walk in by obedience to the Holy Spirit now.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. I Corinthians 15:42-45

For the true believer, the pathway of the narrow gate ends at physical death. At that time, most of us will be sown into a grave and covered by dirt. Our entire life has ended and our body becomes a hidden seed in the earth. But everything we did on earth by faith in Christ becomes a part of the DNA seed of our dead bodies. The believer's spirit/soul will immediately go to be with the Lord, but the body will be resurrected and transformed in glory. Everything sown by the Spirit at that time will be reaped for all eternity. We will reap what we have sown.

Third Day Church Arising

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed

is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day. Genesis 1:11-13

The Lord hid a prophetic picture at creation of the third-day Church arising full of the seed of Christ. The earth was filled with herbs and fruit trees bearing seeds. Herbs speak of spices, the sweet fragrance of worship, praise, adoration and the beauty of Christ. Fruit trees speak of the abundance of the fruit of the Spirit and His gifts. The grasses of the field speak of the abundance of wheat, both the bread of life and the great harvest.

Jesus rose from the grave on the third day and empowered His disciples to do mighty exploits in His name. We are entering into the third thousand years since the birth of Jesus, the holy Seed of God. On the third day, Jesus turned the water into wine at Cana and it was the best wine that was saved until the last (see John 3:1-11). The Lord has saved His best wine until the third-day Church and we are about to become that wine.

The seed in us is good and is the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself. God is inside believers to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). It is His will that we walk through the narrow gate, destroy the works of the devil, bear fruit and reap a worldwide harvest of many souls.

As part of the third-day Church, God's declaration over us is that His seed is good. This speaks to us that He will perfect His seed, the body of Christ, during this third day. We will not have any mixture left in us as His holy fire burns out all the weed seeds.

Walk Through the Narrow Gate

And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob

and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last".

On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You." And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and <u>the third day I shall be perfected</u>.' Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem".

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" Luke 13:22-35 (underlining mine)

Jesus' body, the living Church, will be perfected in the third day as believers walk through the narrow gate. We must choose a lifestyle of repenting and believing, devoting our selves to prayer and the ministry of the word. We must put off the old and put on the new. We must love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength allowing His seed in us to grow to love the Church and the lost. Many who think they are Christians will be shocked to find themselves locked out of the presence of the Lord on Judgment Day. Those who follow the broad way and easy path of religiosity and worldly "Christianity" are not of the holy seed of Jesus. The Lord longs to bring religious "Christians" to Himself but many have hardened their hearts like the first-century Jews.

Grow Up to the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, <u>to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;</u> that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning

craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16 (underlining mine)

God is raising up five-fold ministers who are traversing through the narrow gate. By His grace, I am one of many who are called to equip the saints to measure up to the stature of the fullness of Christ. We must have the right goal if we are ever going to reach it. We also need the wisdom, knowledge and understanding that comes by anointed servants who equip the saints. This book is one of many that I have written to equip the saints to measure up to Christ. My faith continues to grow strong in the Lord in His extraordinary ability to raise up a mature, pure and spotless bride who will glorify Him and walk as Jesus walked.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:17-24

Believers must change their walk immediately, putting off the old corrupted man which is deceived by many lusts. Our minds must be renewed by the living and abiding word of God and the power of the Spirit. We must put on the new man, the holy seed, which is created in true righteousness and holiness. God commands that we become holy and He will empower us to become holy as we trust in Him. The seed of Christ in us can only grow to become like Christ. The seed is good!

While driving all night to Canada with my family at Christmas time in 1995, I was praising God with the aid of worship CD’s. After a few hours of pure worship, the Lord manifested His presence to me in a

most extraordinary way as I drove north along interstate 5 in northern California.

“I want to give you a Christmas gift”, the Lord spoke to me in a profound, inner audible voice. “Ask me for anything you want, and I will give it to you” He promised (John 15:7).

Overwhelmed by the incredible presence of the Lord, I basked in a supernatural gift of faith atmosphere for twenty minutes or so before I replied, “Lord, I want to be holy”. In my spirit, I was absolutely convinced that God was going to answer my request. I waited on the Lord for twenty minutes before answering Him because I wanted to ask precisely what He wanted me to ask for. I had thought of Solomon’s request for wisdom and then thought about the end of his life and his failures. Once I spoke to the Lord, I knew that I had made the right request. But I thought that God was going to answer that request in two days. Wrong!

What actually happened that Christmas in 1995 is that I received a pure seed of the living word of God in the good soil of my heart that had been cultivated by some hours of worship and blessed by God with an anointing of supernatural faith. That seed has continued to grow into a tree that is now bearing fruit. The pathway to becoming transformed in the inner man to the holiness of God has been the difficult way of the narrow gate. It has been extremely painful at times.

My pride has been crushed by the rock of God. Every inch of my flesh man has been examined by the holy light of God and dealt with by the Surgeon’s knife. What the knife didn’t cut out, the fire went after and I have been a continuos burnt offering for nearly seven years. The demonic resistance to growing up in Christ has been enormous. The serpent was cursed to eat the dust. Our carnal flesh man is dust. Any uncrucified flesh in my life seemed to become fair game for the enemy during those trying years. God called me to walk holy and if I didn’t in a certain area, the enemy was watching and waiting. Obeying the Lord of hosts quickly became the wisest thing to do every day.

Even though I was a highly respected missionary for two decades and the executive director of a successful Christian conference center, my inner man was still filled with filth that I could not see, nor did I want to. The Lord is gracious and good to hear our prayers. He has been answering mine! I encourage you to pray, “Lord, I want to be holy”. Walking yoked with Jesus through the narrow gate will get you there alongside Him. His holy seed is in you and He is good!

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. II Corinthians 5:9-11

The Apostle Paul was blessed to know the terror of the Lord, Who is the Judge of all creation. Paul feared God and set his heart to please the Lord in all things. We please the Lord as we walk by faith in the revealed word, the voice of God, given by the Holy Spirit. Paul was led by the Spirit to plant many churches and knew that he would be physically beaten time and again by those who hated the Lord. The way was difficult for Paul, but he pressed through because he knew the fear of the Lord. We can follow Paul's example.

And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:22-24

Paul didn't walk through the narrow gate, he ran through it. He was completely bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem. Paul grew so strong in the spirit that he could only do what the Holy Spirit was showing him to do even though it meant intense physical suffering. Paul was a great overcomer who feared the Lord and ran the race with endurance.

Most of the Church has lost the fear of the Lord. Few talk about knowing the terror of the Lord. Many don't walk by the Spirit, let alone run after God. Most "Christians" do not live as though the Judge was going to hold them accountable for every idle word or every carnal deed. The judgment seat of Christ is real and all believers will appear before the righteous Judge. He will recompense us for our deeds done in the body whether good or evil.

Some who think they are going to heaven will appear before the great white throne of judgment and be sent into everlasting judgment in the lake of fire. The extreme eternal torment in outer darkness and flames of fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth, pain and suffering

forever and ever awaits those who fail to walk through the narrow gate. What a horrendous prospect for millions and even billions of souls who failed to enter through the narrow gate.

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <u>Many</u> will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Matthew 7:21-23 (underlining mine)

I hear the word "many" over and over in my spirit. I shudder to think that the veil of deception could be so strong over my mind that I would think I was entering in only to be told on that day, "Depart from Me"! God is burning a holy fire of fear in my heart and by His grace mercy and power, I intend to press through that narrow gate by obeying His voice and doing His will.

God is a righteous Judge and a rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). For all who pass through the narrow gate, the Lord Jesus will bless them with specific eternal rewards that will be theirs for all eternity. All who are saved will enjoy the blessings of heaven and all the glories of the presence of the Lord. Many of the redeemed will be an eternal part of the Bride of Christ and experience a perfect oneness and intimacy of pure pleasure with Jesus Christ forever. There will be rewards of crowns, thrones and honors for saints throughout the ages who have lived to please God.

Everything we say and do on earth will be judged one day. We can become hundredfold fruit bearing producers or thirtyfold or come before the Lord without fruit, a terrifying prospect. The harvest of rewards is completely up to us in our stewardship of the grace and assignments God gives to us. Some will barely get into heaven and others will be rewarded as great kings who lived decades for the Lord. Sadly, most of earth's inhabitants will be turned away from entrance into paradise on that terrible day. Paul knew that terror and it motivated him to press through the resistance and make disciples who walked through the narrow gate with him. God is calling for His mighty Church to cleanse herself, fear Him, take up the yoke of Jesus and walk through the narrow gate.

I exhort you in the Lord Jesus to hear the voice of the Judge who says,

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by

it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
Matthew 7:13-14