



“SOUL FOOD”



“SPIRITUAL”

Food for Your Soul:

A Book of Devotional Readings to Feed the Soul

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A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV): *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

The Apostle Paul is credited as the author of the book of 2nd Corinthians. Paul writes to the church at Corinth to correct misunderstandings and misconceptions concerning the Gospel. This particular passage provides encouragement and tells us when we give ourselves over to Christ we become a brand new person from what we used to be.

Most of us have spent **YEARS** getting dirty and wallowing in the muck of sin, yet we expect an immediate visible change when we give ourselves to Christ. We give ourselves to Christ at 10:00 a.m. and at 10:01 we expect to see an IMMEDIATE visible change in our visage and demeanor, and we become disappointed the change is not immediately noticed by those outside the church. This is not to say this can't happen, but for most people, it takes a little time to COMPLETELY surrender control to the Lord and give him FULL access to every facet of their life for a complete deep scale spiritual cleaning and for the change to come about and be noticeable.

When we don't see the change promised in this passage, we may be tempted to force a change and as a result find ourselves in a temporary state of change similar to the changes that happen at the beginning of a marriage and that some inmates experience in prison.

The marriage change is similar to the actions of a newlywed. At the beginning it is all about pleasing their partner, but after a while, the fear of losing one's identity takes hold, and things in the past began to affect the present and the future of the couple. Old friends become more important than the spouse. Old habits are rediscovered and maintaining the previous lifestyle with minimum changes becomes important. The Agape unconditional love turns to Eros conditional love. This change says it is okay to claim Christianity, but not at the expense of losing oneself in Christ. The next change is the Prison change. This change comes about when a person is deprived freedom from life's issues, and looks for the freedom in Christ. The minute the crisis in their life is over, they go back to the way they were and go back to handling things the way they used to instead of the way God wants them to.

The change we want is the God change. When God changes us, we spend more time focusing on God than what we think God should be doing. We find as we draw close to him, he in turn draws closer to us. We find we no longer want to do things the way we used to because we want to please our Father by doing things the way he wants us to do it. All we have to do is LET GO, and LET GOD have control and the change will come!

Key Thought: If you are waiting for a change in your life since you have accepted Christ, fear not! ... A change is gonna come. In fact, God may be spurring you to use your experiences to work in his vineyard right now...work that you never thought you would do. Let God use you. Don't worry about your capability; just make sure you give God your availability and a CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

A LOOK THAT KILLS!

Scripture: Hebrews 12:2 (KJV): *² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

We have all heard the expression of going through life with blinders on. I am not sure of the origin of this phrase, but I have come to learn it means being oblivious to things around you that others would consider obvious. I was once told in horse races, the horses have blinders put on their eyes to keep them focused on the path ahead but blind to the horses running beside them or anything that is not directly in front of them. I have never been to a horse race, but I imagine this practice would be great to have in our Christian walk. We could easily stay focused on the race ahead of us instead of being concerned with the race ran by others alongside us.

The idea of looking ahead is great in theory, but hard to do in practice. Human nature causes us to hang our head in shame, or look down when things don't go our way. When we feel discouraged, defeated, and sometimes destroyed we look down. A look of defeat on the face of a Saint could easily "Kill" the joy of a new believer facing a similar trial. We must always remember to present ourselves as a child of God, continually seeking greater maturity in Christ. We must never present ourselves in a matter that gives the idea we are the best God will ever be able to do with us on this side of glory. Every day brings us new mercies from God and gives us the chance to learn about the grace of God.

Sometimes we may not look down, but get so focused on "looking at" the problem we become oblivious to anything else besides the problem we face. Isaiah 40:31 talks about waiting on the Lord and mounting on wings like eagles. The eagle is a majestic bird that flies high, but can still look low. The eagle is able to get a panoramic view of all below him instead of a restricted view. When we just look "at" a situation we often get the restricted view instead of the eagle eye "God" view. We may see an impossible situation, obstacles and problems. God sees a possible situation, opportunities for growth and potential praise reports. Looking at a problem can be deadly when just focusing on the problem and not seeing possible solutions. The problem can be like facing a giant, guaranteed to crush you, when in fact you should view things as David did; with God with him, the giant was already defeated. When we look and stay focused on Jesus, we "kill" the opportunity for worldly distractions to take root, grow and ultimately dominate our lives. We may still have the "weeds" of the world trying to crowd out the things of God, but staying focused on the end result...being with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ helps us see the worldly weeds for what they are; a nuisance that has to be dealt with, but can be rooted out with spiritual "Weed-B-Gone" also known as the word of God.

If our look is going to kill, let the look be focused on Jesus Christ and kill the doubts, discouragement and defeat the worldly people who will try to tell us it is only a matter before we are also a victim. Let our look to Jesus, get others interested in what we are "looking" at, so they too will look, and just maybe, if the whole world begins to look to Christ, we will find all the issues we face in life will not look so daunting knowing Christ is on our side. When we get tired of being tired, we look to Christ and see we can have rest in him.

When we feel unloved, unwanted, unsuccessful, useless or overwhelmed, look to Christ! In him we see he can supply all our needs and all things are possible and can be done through and with him!

Key Thought: If you want to make the devil mad, put your spiritual blinders on, focus on the things of God and become blind to the things of the world! The world feeds on our confusion but starves to death when we focus on God!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

AND NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:3-11: 3For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 9For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Unlike other religions, their foundational figure died and never came back. Ours died a horrible death, and out of love came back for all of us. His return is not based on our acceptance of him, but a promise by him.

A few decades ago, a gentleman known as Paul Harvey, a radio broadcaster would deliver information as factual news, and save the surprise twist to the end, following it with his signature phrase... And now you know... the *rest* of the story. As Christians, we often focus on the fact that Christ was born, bled, died and rose on the third day, but we forget to look beyond the crucifixion, burial and resurrection to gather the true magnitude of what the triune God did for us by sending Jesus Christ to fulfill his divine and perfect will. In order for us to fully understand the significance of Christ's resurrection, we must look at the empty cross, the empty tomb and the empty burial clothes.

The empty cross symbolizes that not did Jesus come down, but his redemptive work on the cross was completed. Some churches still have Jesus on the cross which in essence means His redemptive work is not yet finished, even though Christ himself said in John 19:30 "It is Finished!" We have come to know the fulfillment of the law was satisfied, with the death of Christ, since the wages of sin is death. We come to know the Levitical practices of a blood sacrifice had been made once and for all by the "Lamb of God" without a spot or blemish to his name. We have come to know with the "Empty Cross", we now have the ability to walk across the chasm of sin, born by the sacrifice, born by the cross, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to be in a right standing relationship with God.

The empty tomb means, not to insult anyone's intelligence, no one was there. Jesus either moved or was moved. We know there were guards posted to keep anyone from moving Jesus, so something on the inside had to happen for Jesus to move...something we have come to know as the resurrection! The empty tomb means a promise of new life for the believer and the promise that neither death nor life shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ.

The empty clothes death had no hold over him, the prophecy was fulfilled and the grave couldn't keep him. We can't forget Jesus left the grave clothes because a person that is alive no longer need the clothes of the dead! The fear of death, the sting of death, the finality of death was erased when Jesus rose from the grave!

Key Thought: The empty cross, the empty tomb, the empty clothes all tells us of God's love for us...And now you know the rest of the story, but the question is, what will you do with this information?

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

A TRIP TO THE BANK

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-21 (KJV): ¹⁹ *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

We live in a society where we are taught to amass all the riches we can now so we can live comfortably later. We are also told we live in dog-eat-dog world, and we have to get ours while we can before someone else takes it from us. The result...we do what we have to do, to get what we want, with no regard to who we may hurt, maim or injure. We easily forget that when we leave this earth, whatever wealth we have amassed, whatever fame we have enjoyed will not accompany us. In essence, we are building a fortune for someone else to enjoy. We are seeking fame and notoriety to maybe be mentioned on a page in a history book. No one will capture who we really were, or what we stood for unless our deposits are made in a bank where the name of the big depositors are used as an example of how to save and get the best return on investment possible. We just have to make sure when we make a trip to the “Bank of Heaven” we are making the right deposits, with the right attitude, or we may find all that we did was for nothing.

I found people attempting to make “heavenly deposits” get in trouble with at least one of three attitudes; the tithers, the takers, and the totalers. The tithers are legalistic and do things because that is what the bible requires. I am not talking people who “TITHE” but a generalistic attitude of someone more concerned with the letter of the law than the spirit. The “tither” will make sure they give their ten percent and it is known if they do more, so when it is not convenient they can do less. These are the ones that are continuously checking to see if their spiritual “bank balance” is increasing as if we can buy the grace of God. The “takers” are the ones with the attitudes of what God has for me it is for me, and if you are not careful, I will take what he has for you too. The takers are the ones who always look to the church to provide without doing much of anything for themselves. I learned long ago, God has a “workfare” program, not “welfare”. God always gives a hand up, but seldom a hand out. Then of course there are the totalers. The “totalers” look at what the tither does and what the taker does, gets a sum total of where they are wrong and use their example of what to do right. They look for their idea of the end result and fail to focus on God’s plan for the end.

In a perfect world, we will do things for the glory of God, in service to God, because of the love, greatness and awesomeness of God. We should consider it a privilege to serve God because he doesn’t need us, but wants us in his family. We should consider it an honor to promote the Gospel of Christ and teach others about God, because the more we spread the word, the more the word will be known, lived, modeled and applied. Basically, only what we do for Christ will last and if we want the “BEST” rate of return for our investment in the heavenly bank, let everything we do glorify, magnify and edify God. When we do that, our treasures will last eternally, unlike the stuff on earth which will eventually pass away.

Key Thought: When we make our deposits in the “Heavenly Bank” the spiritual interest and rate of return we receive cannot be matched. When we sow to the Spirit we reap the benefits beyond measure!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

ARE YOU READY FOR THE TEST?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15: ¹⁵*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

This is the second letter from the Apostle Paul to his spiritual son in the ministry, Timothy. Paul writes because first and foremost he was lonely. Everyone, except Luke, was either away or had deserted him. Paul wanted Timothy to join him. Paul was also worried about the welfare of the churches during Nero's persecution. The final reason Paul wrote this letter is he wanted to write to the Ephesian church through his letter to Timothy. Paul is facing imminent death and wants to encourage his "son" to carry on the ministry and faithfully guard the Gospel. The scripture tells us we must study the word, not only to know what we are to be about, but to be prepared when "tested" by the spirit and ways of the world. We know our adversary will mix just enough "truth" with his lies, that if we don't know the truth, we won't know what is real or fact, nor be able separate fact from fiction!

Imagine walking into class on the first day of school and being told you are going to take a test. The outcome of this test will determine the rest of your life. It will determine what jobs you qualify for, your family and where you will live. This test is also 100% of your grade and will follow you the rest of your life. The students protest, but the professor counters by reminding everyone about the summer reading list. As you look back, you remember getting the list and being told the books contained all the information you needed to pass this test. You also remember a strange plea of urgency to read the book. You realize you are not prepared and the blame rests squarely upon your own shoulders.

Thankfully, I have never had that experience in any class I have taken. I know I would be quite afraid and angry with myself because I didn't heed the warning. I would reflect on all the times I could have read the book, even took notes, but I told myself I can always do it later. Now, the test is upon me, and all I can do is "guess" at the answers, knowing the end result will affect my life.

We as Christians face tests daily, and the only way we can be prepared is to study the good book, also known as the Bible. I have been told the letters which spell Bible; stand for Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. I don't know if that is true, but it can accurately summarize what the Bible should be to the believer...an instruction manual for living before we are to be with our heavenly Father. I have found by knowing what the Bible says, I know the biblical truth versus the world's version. Knowing the word of God gets us closer to the heart and mind of God. We began to understand not just what he said, but how it applies to us. When tested in life I want to find myself coasting through the test and getting the stamp of "Approval" from our almighty Father!

Key Thought: Study the word, to know the word. To know the word is to live the word. Man's word can never compete with God's word!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

...AS YOU WILL

Scripture: Matthew 26:39: *..And He went a little further and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.*

As we look at this passage of scripture, we see the Lord preparing for the pain and suffering he would endure to provide the sinner a way back to our heavenly Father. We see Christ is not looking forward to the beatings, pain suffering, crucifixion and ultimate lying down of his life, but...he is not concerned with his comfort, but the will of the Father!

Easter has passed, and the remembrance of Resurrection Sunday, the Passion of the Christ, and all Christ has endured has been placed in the back of our mind to be replaced with thoughts of the next “Big Event” to come. We may be thinking about Memorial Day, or perhaps even thinking so far ahead we are planning for this year’s Christmas play spectacular. Whatever we are planning for, the question we must ask ourselves is are we planning to display and model the same level of commitment to the cause of Christ that he showed for the cause of our salvation?

The universal church in general seems to have a problem with sustained commitment to the cause of Christ. We will feed the homeless, evangelize the unchurched, and tirelessly conduct clothing drives for the needy as long as it is convenient to our schedule. We are willing to go to Church, and being involved with the Kingdom building work as long as we are not too tired, too sleepy, or too interested in finally having some “ME” time that we feel is so much deserved.

I routinely hear people talk about what they don’t have time to do, or feel like doing because of whatever they having going on in their lives when it comes to doing the most simple things for Christ. What would our salvation look like if on that evening in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus didn’t say, “Not as I will, but as You will”, but instead said “Not as I will, as long as it doesn’t inconvenience me, stress me or interfere with my ME time?”

Christ displayed a level of commitment to the will of the Father, that if we echoed just a shadow of that same commitment it would be amazing what could be accomplished through us, and with us in the Kingdom building work. Perhaps we should examine ourselves and ask the question “Christ’s commitment to me had him give all he had, am I doing the same for him? Christ was so committed to the will of the Father he took the best the of the worst the world had to offer, defeated death and out of love, because of love, through commitment came back to us as our risen Savior.

Key Thought: Christ showed his commitment to us. How do we show our commitment to him, through our will, or through God’s will?

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

BE READY, BE READY, BE READY!

Scripture: Revelations 22:11-12: ¹¹ *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* ¹² *And behold, I come quickly; and my reward [is] with me, to give every man according as his works shall be.*

The book of Revelation is a compilation of things “revealed” to John, the beloved disciple during his exile on the island of Patmos. John writes this letter to encourage the faithful to resist emperor worship and to let them know the final showdown between God and Satan is imminent. The key scripture, verse 12, is one of encouragement, and warning. It encourages the believer to continue doing the Kingdom building work, because when the Lord comes back, he will bring the believers reward with him. It serves as a warning to the unbeliever or those that are not completely committed to Christ that whether you are doing what you are supposed to do, or planning to do it tomorrow, he will come quickly and when he arrives, all future plans to “get right” go out the window! We must be ready at all times, and live continuously as if he is returning any minute!

I remember as a little child it was hard to sleep on Christmas Eve. I didn’t have visions of sugar plums dancing in my head, or worried about the fact not a creature was stirring not even a mouse...I couldn’t sleep because I was waiting for Santa Claus. I couldn’t wait to see if he brought me the thing I desired most, a bicycle, G.I. Joe with the Kung Fu grip or whatever the “thing” was that year. Christmas was the one day I looked forward to all year, not only because of the gifts and Santa Claus (my parents), but the church service would be full of my favorite songs, food, the Christmas story and fellowship with friends. I was saddened as I got older and discovered most people find themselves too busy to celebrate, let alone acknowledge the reason for the season...the coming of the promised Messiah, the birth of Jesus Christ. It has gotten worse. We no longer have Christ-Mass parties, no saying of “In the Name of Jesus” closing an infrequent public prayer and many other things. Our society has fallen to having “Pseudo Church”; service appearing filled by the Holy Spirit filled event, but might as well be a scripted television show. We have churches offering “Buffet Religion” where congregants are allowed to choose what elements of Christianity suits their lifestyle. Scriptures tell us God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. When the Lord comes, he will come without warning and will bring his reward or payment for whatever a person is doing. We must be ready at all times, because when he comes, that is not the time to start planning for his return. If we want to be with the Lord, when he comes we must Be Ready, Be Ready, Be Ready!

Key Thought: Christ’s return for the believer means it is time to clock out from the Kingdom building work and collect the wages for your efforts...eternal life with him!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

CAN I GET A WITNESS!

Scripture: Acts 1:8 (KJV): *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

The book of Acts is believed to be authored by Luke, the physician and companion of Paul. Many wonder why if Luke authored the book named after him, why didn't he just include "Acts" into the book of Luke. A close look at the book of Luke and Acts reveal Luke dealt with the actions of Christ, where "Acts" deal with the establishment, growth, persecution and key players in the early church.

Many people are familiar with the Great Commission and the mandate mentioned to "GO", but many wonder where they are to "GO". Acts 1:8 tells us, very eloquently to go to our familiar places (Jerusalem), those places a little less familiar (Judaea), the places we would only go in extreme circumstances (Samaria), and if we still don't know where to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are to go to the "Uttermost part of the earth". True Christians love the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and what he has done for them personally, but when it comes to sharing the Good News, I have found Christians fall into three general categories; Unwilling Witnesses, Subpoenaed Witnesses, and Eager and Willing Witnesses.

The unwilling witness tends to be more concerned with worldly relationships than Godly relationships. There is more anxiety about going along to get along, than standing on Holy ground to show God strong. This type witness is more concerned with how they are perceived than professing by words and deeds a profession of faith and what they believe. This may not be because they are ashamed of the Gospel, but could be a perceived way to survive, unsure about what should or should not be said, or maybe more concerned with their salvation than others. If pressed, these witnesses will finally step forward and exhort and exclaim the goodness of God, but only after being put under extreme spiritual duress.

Some Christian witnesses are subpoenaed or sought out because of their experiences, the transformation or the obvious grace God has bestowed upon their life. They were told they would never walk again, and God said "Not so" and they did. They should have been dead, but it is obvious God stepped in and saved them to be asked, implored, questioned or subpoenaed as a witness for his love, grace, and mercy.

The Eager and willing Christian witness is one that whenever and opportunity presents itself, they will exhibit Christ through their actions, promote Christ through their words, show Christ in how they carry themselves and treat their fellow brothers and sisters. They leave no doubt they love God with all they have and their neighbor as themselves. They can't wait to share the Good news whenever, wherever, however, to whomever they have the opportunity. We must never forget, Jesus paid it all, all to him we owe. Sin has left a crimson stain He washed white as snow!

Key Thought: God is looking for a few good men and women to be witnesses for him. God is looking for a few good men and women to share the Good News so everyone has an opportunity to get to know him and his son for themselves. Can he get a witness? Can he count on you?

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

CHRISTMAS WISH: GET BY OR GET BETTER

Scripture: John 10:9-10: . ⁹ *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* ¹⁰ *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

Many of us wait with bated breath and eager anticipation to see what presents lie underneath the tree, and if it is the “one” thing we wished for all year will be there. The Israelites waited, like many of us do, for the fulfillment of the prophecy, the promise and plan God said would come to make life better for them. They

whispered and talked about who would come and how the Savior would come, and the deceivers of the world had them believe the Savior would come in like a whirlwind, conquering the world with his power and might...making all bow down before his throne as he crushed their resistance. The other religious leaders had them believe that by following a set of rituals, rules and regulations, their efforts would guarantee them a place with God. Christ came, and during his ministry made it plain. He is the door to salvation, and although others may come steal, kill and destroy, He came that we could have life to the fullest.

When I was younger, I wished for G.I. Joe, with the Kung Fu grip. When I was older, I wished for “Lester, the Ventriloquist Doll”. When I came to understand the true meaning of Christmas, my Christmas wishes changed. I no longer thought about the gifts that may be under the tree for me, but I began to appreciate the gifts I already had received. My gifts included my wonderful wife, adult children and my granddaughters. I have so much to be grateful for, but there are no words to express the gift that I re-opened back in 1998...the gift of salvation, that was unwrapped over 2,000 years ago, and even with all the information available, I am still amazed at how miraculous this gift is. You see, I was saved at an early age, but suffered from my own bad theology. Christ took me to the world “seminary”, got me on the right learning track and helped me to revisit the gift of his birth, life, death and resurrection, but more importantly what it meant to me.

When Christ was born, he came in with none of the fanfare you would expect at the birth of a King. A proclamation was not sent out to the world where all citizens were required to come and pay their respects. Oh, the message went out, but only a select few decided to come...those that heard the angels, understood the promise and prophecy was fulfilled and the our Savior was born.

The problem is, many of us celebrate the birth, understand Christ is the gift of God, but never take advantage of all that comes with the God’s gift of his only begotten son. It’s like getting a new smartphone, and only use it for making calls. The full power of the phone goes to waste. God’s gift of his son gives us the ability to not only live our life, but with Christ live our life to the fullest. So the question we must ask ourselves for this Christmas and going into the next year...do we just want to get by doing the bare minimum, or get better. We can just celebrate the birth of Christ and get by, or we can celebrate the birth and what it means in terms of our salvation. We can get by, or we can get better. Get better at serving God, being a child of God, listening to God and sharing the goodness of God. Choose to get better. Give your life to God, and watch him show up and show out!

Christmas Wish: Get By or Get Better (cont...)

Key Thought: As we celebrate the birth of Christ, bring this year to a close and start a new one...do we just want to get by or get better? If we want to get by...let’s continue with lackluster service to the Lord, if we serve at all. If we want to get BETTER, we must GET GOD AS OUR TOP PRIORITY...in all our ways acknowledge him, and HE WILL DIRECTY OUR PATH!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

DON'T GET IT CONFUSED!

Scripture: Galatians 6:7-10 (KJV)⁷ *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* ⁸ *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* ⁹ *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* ¹⁰ *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to counter claims of the legalistic Judaizers, who were telling the Galatian believer's circumcision was a requirement for salvation. Theologians dispute if the intended audience was southern Galatia or northern Galatia, but the message remains the same without regard to whom it was written....the Law of Moses is not what saves, Christ saves.

Many people feel because Christ saves, and salvation is so easy to obtain, we can give lackluster service to God and it will be considered "Good enough for Christian work". Some people believe that since their half-hearted effort is better than others best efforts, they only have to give God the bare minimum to get by. They make sure they are seen doing the right thing in public, even though they are doing the wrong things in private. They claim they want to receive a word from God, but when the word comes, they are conveniently "busy" elsewhere. God calls on them, and they let God's call go to spiritual voice mail to be dealt with at a more convenient time.

We then begin to wonder why all weapons against us seem to prosper, when before none did. We wonder why God seems to have left us and forsaken us, which seems he broke his promise. Why he is no longer our shelter

in time of storm. He no longer supplies any of our needs. Maybe we are confused...we thought we were fooling God with our half-hearted, lackluster, lethargic, lazy, uncommitted, lifeless, slothful, unrepentant, legalistic worship, when in fact we were just fooling ourselves. God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. What happens quite often is God is there for us, but we are not there for him.

He will make provisions for us in Bible study for our spiritual problem, but “what happened wuz” we decided to skip Bible study because we were just too tired. He gave answers during the morning worship service about how to deal with our children, our spouse, our significant other without compromising our Christianity, but “what happened wuz” we decided to stay home and feel sorry for ourselves. He showed up and showed out in such a mighty way that everyone felt his presence during Sunday school, but “what happened wuz”, we missed out because we didn’t want to miss the big game on television. God is doing, will do, and has done so many things, but “what happened wuz”, we didn’t have a clue about the true awesomeness of God, because we have not fully surrendered ourselves to him and let him control our life.

Don’t get confused! We reap what we sow! If we give God our leftovers, how can we EXPECT his best?

Key Thought: If we give God our best, there is no doubt he will definitely bless us beyond our belief!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?



NOTES:

EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD, PART I.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV): *12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

If we were to look at this passage of scripture in a more contemporary version of Bible language, it would probably read something like this... *“So since we stand surrounded by all those who have gone before, an enormous cloud of witnesses, let us drop every extra weight, every sin that clings to us and slackens our pace, and let us run with endurance the long race set before us. We may feel alone, but we aren’t. We are surrounded by an army of witnesses. They have run the race of faith and finished well. It is now our turn. ² Now stay focused on Jesus, who designed and perfected our faith. He endured the cross and ignored the shame of that death because He focused on the joy that was set before Him; and now He is seated beside God on the throne, a place of honor.”*

A few years ago, Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell and Ted Ross were recast in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. The new version was a more contemporary urbanized version called *The Wiz*. Dorothy (Ms. Ross) was still trying to get home, the Scarecrow (Mr. Jackson) a brain, the Tin man (Mr. Russell) a heart and the cowardly Lion (Mr. Ross) courage. They met many obstacles along the way, to include people that claimed to be for them, but were actually against them. They discovered they were hanging on to things that slowed them down from reaching their goal...to get to the Great Oz, in hopes they would attain their hearts desire. Their motto was “Don’t carry nothing that might be load, come on and ease on down the road.”

Christians at times have a similar “Oz” experience. Just like Dorothy, they want to get home, but our home is not in Kansas, but in Heaven with the Father. Just like the Scarecrow, we want a brain...not to be smart, but to understand the mind of God, the ways of God and the plan God has for us. The Tin man wanted a heart, and like him, we should want to have a heart like Christ, because we know the Bible says love conquers all. The

Cowardly Lion wanted courage, and we desire to not only be able to walk boldly before the throne of Grace, but courage in knowing when God is for us, whom shall we fear.

God provides all we need to do his will and ultimately be with him, but when we look at the first part of the scripture it talks about a great crowd of witnesses. I have discovered that some people witnessing what you are doing are not always hoping and praying for your success. I have discovered sometimes in the crowd are haters, takers and manipulators. The “haters” have nothing but jealousy for you, whether deserved or not. The “takers” are for you as long as they can use you, and when they can’t, they are done with you. The manipulators follow the path of the devil, manipulating for their purpose and then making their actions seem to be your fault. Our desire is to search for the encouragers and up lifters. They are the ones who have gone before, paved the path and tell us “KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD.

Ease on Down the Road, Part 1. (Cont...)

Key Thought: If we want to “Ease on Down” the path Christ has for us, the first thing we must do is not let the haters, takers and manipulators determine our failure, but the encouragers and up lifters cheer us on to victory!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD, PART II.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV): *12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

In Part 1, of this three part series, we discussed how a few years ago, Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell and Ted Ross were recast in an updated version of the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, called *The Wiz*. Dorothy (Ms. Ross) was still trying to get home, the Scarecrow (Mr. Jackson) a brain, the Tin man (Mr. Russell) a heart and the cowardly Lion (Mr. Ross) courage. They met many obstacles along the way, to include people that claimed to be for them, but was actually against them. They discovered they were hanging on to things that slowed them down from reaching their goal...to get to the Great Oz, in hopes they would attain their hearts desire. Their motto was “Don’t carry nothing that might be load, come on and ease on down the road.” Christians are often in the same situation as Dorothy and the gang. They want to get home; for the Christian that is to be with the Lord. They want a brain, or a mind to understand what God has for them to do and the wisdom to do it. They want a heart to love like Christ, in spite of facing hate. They want courage, to say no with emphasis for those who go against the way of Christ; even though the rest of the world may say it’s okay to forget about Christ.

We discussed how when we look at the “great crowd of witnesses”, everyone that is watching you is not there to encourage you. Some are “haters”; hating your successes, because of their failures. Some are “takers”, continually wanting you to give while they give you no return on your investment. There are the manipulators who will do what they want and then try to make you believe it was your entire fault. These are the “crowd” that sooner or later will reveal their true nature if you look closely. These are the “crowd” we have to refuse to let dictate our successes, but look to the encouragers and up lifters, who may have had their voice drowned out because of the other three. These encouragers and up lifters know you can do all things through Christ. They will remind you that HE did it for me and HE WILL do it for you.

In Part 2 we take a look at our “spiritual weight”. Have we put on a few pounds or carrying a few pounds we can do without? Perhaps we are dealing with situations making our journey harder based on things we caused because we did not turn it over to God. Perhaps we are dealing with things that are actually someone else’s cross to bear, but we decided we know better than God so we are going to deal with it. Perhaps the extra weight comes from carrying around things we should have released to the altar a long time ago. Look at your spiritual weight, and if this is not what God intends for you to have...go on a spiritual diet and shed the weight. We are supposed to be in this cause for Christ to win it, not just say we showed up. If something is slowing us down spiritually, check with the life coach “Jesus” and get to our optimum weight!

Ease On Down The Road, Part II. (cont...)

Key Thought: If we want to “Ease on Down” the path Christ has for us, the second thing we must do is stop holding on to things that we need to “let go and let God” take care of. If it slows us from the cause of Christ, we need to turn it over to God and let him order our steps!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD, PART III.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV): *12 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

In Part 1, of this three part series, we discussed how a few years ago, Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell and Ted Ross were recast in the movie called *The Wiz*, which was a contemporary urbanized version of the movie called *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy (Ms. Ross) was still trying to get home, the Scarecrow (Mr.

Jackson) a brain, the Tin man (Mr. Russell) a heart and the cowardly Lion (Mr. Ross) courage. They met many obstacles along the way, to include people that claimed to be for them, but were actually against them. They discovered they were hanging on to things that slowed them down from reaching their goal...to get to the Great Oz, in hopes they would attain their hearts desire. Their motto was “Don’t carry nothing that might be load, come on and ease on down the road.” Christians are often in the same situation as Dorothy and the gang. They want to get home; for the Christian that is to be with the Lord. They want a brain, or a mind to understand what God has for them to do and the wisdom to do it. They want a heart to love like Christ, in spite of facing hate. They want courage, to say no with emphasis for those who go against the way of Christ; even though the rest of the world may say it’s okay to forget about Christ.

We discussed how when we look at the “great crowd of witnesses”, everyone that is watching you is not there to encourage you. Some are “haters”; hating your successes, because of their failures. Some are “takers”, continually wanting you to give while they give you no return on your investment. There are the manipulators who will do what they want and then try to make you believe it was your fault. These members of the “crowd” will sooner or later reveal their true nature if you look closely. In Part 2 we took a look at our “spiritual weight”. We discovered sometimes we are carrying extra “spiritual weight” because of situations we have caused, situations we have taken as our own, or situations we should have released long ago. We discovered if there is something slowing us down spiritually, check with the life coach “Jesus” and get to our optimum weight!

In Part 3, we look at getting our direction, and getting our goal so we can ease on down the road. Our direction is moving toward the likeness and our focusing on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. Our goal is heaven bound; pressing toward the mark of the higher calling of Jesus Christ. When we know where we are headed, and what we hope to accomplish on the journey and at the destination, it makes it easier to...

1. See who is for us and who is against us. Focus on the encouragers and up lifters and let God deal with the others.
2. Shed the spiritual weight that holds us back from being all God wants and has called us to be.
3. Remember being like, representing and moving toward Jesus is the goal so we can
4. EASE ON DOWN, EASE ON DOWN THE ROAD!

Ease on Down the Road, Part III. (cont...)

Key Thought: If we want to “Ease on Down” the path Christ has for us, the second thing we must do is stop holding on to things that we need to “let go and let God” take care of. If it slows us from the cause of Christ, we need to turn it over to God and let him order our steps!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:6-8: ⁶ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Many Christians believe they have fought and are fighting the good fight, but wonder why they keep getting knocked down and suffering spiritual knock outs. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that we are to run to get the prize and not run aimlessly. Don't fight like a boxer beating the air, but make your body a slave so you don't disqualify yourself. Many people get knocked down because they are still holding back and holding on to things they should have let go long ago. They are holding back because they are afraid of the change that might come if they fully commit. They hold on to things of the past because even though it might not be good it is comfortable and familiar. A person has to be in it to win it, meaning getting rid of those things that keep you from being everything God has called you to be.

A Christian can fight the good fight, but it does absolutely no good if they are not striving to finish the work Christ has given them. I know a man who puts forth a good effort starting many projects, and when he works on them, he works hard. The problem this gentlemen has, he seldom finishes any of the other projects he has started, leaving his work place in total chaos if someone had to come behind him! David wanted to build a house for the Lord, but he discovered the job was for his son to do. David did start ordering the supplies, so when the time came, the project could get started. What if we procrastinated on finishing the jobs God gives us,

and he reciprocated by procrastinating on the things we have asked of him. When we fight the good fight, we must finish our course or someone else will have to fight their own fight, plus finish ours.

When we fight the good fight, and strive to finish our course, we must use our faith to sustain us. Our faith could be described as fully accepting identity through him, which means we identify with Christ and focus all our being on being like Christ. We no longer look at things the way man would, but try to see things the way Christ would. I have learned that by faith, what I see with my physical eyes does not have to make sense when I can look with my spiritual eyes and know God is still in control. I know that once I believe God is in control, I begin to see evidence he definitely is in control. This gives me what I need to hang in there, give it my all, and complete the job at hand. My reward is the crown of righteousness I receive from the Father and hearing his well done!

Key Thought: It has been often said only what we do for Christ will last. Can you think of anything better than knowing whatever job he gave you, you hung in there and gave it your all until it was done, while never stopping and believing you are working for the Lord!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

FOR UP THE ROAD IS ETERNAL GAIN

Scripture: Luke 9:23-26: *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*

A person that decides to follow Christ must be willing to let Christ lead the way in all things. One cannot say the follow Christ, but still try to do things their own way. This brings up the next step, which is denying oneself. Many Christians think this means living a pious life and never having fun. Denying oneself in this context has nothing to do with not having fun, but has everything to do with putting the will and way of God AHEAD of your own personal wants and desires. Christ came that we can have life more abundantly, so that doesn't mean we can't have fun, it just means we should focus on the fun that shows Christ centered relationships and fellowship.

The last piece to examine is taking up our cross daily. We all have issues and circumstances we have to deal with in life; our cross to bear if you will. We must ensure we don't let these "crosses" hold us back from doing what God has called us to do. Pick it up, and move on with the tasks we have been assigned. The Apostle Paul called himself an ambassador in chains for Christ when imprisoned. He chose to promote the faith instead of letting his imprisonment detract from his faith. We must do the same. What's more important, whatever that "cross" might be, Jesus will share the burden with you if you let him. He may even remove it!

When we make the proclamation we will follow Christ, this is not something we do when convenient, but we do it daily, in spite of whatever cross we may bear. We pick it up and follow him! Our motivation to continue this journey is not based on the idea of saying "look at what I did for Christ"! It is not based on the idea of being named the Christian of the millennium. Our motivation is the ultimate reward...being in the presence of the Father. The road may be hard and filled with problems. The road may be rough and filled with pain and despair...but fear not! It is worth it. We should not weary in doing good and never fear our living is in vain. My Bible tells me my living is not in vain, hold on a little while longer and I will discover that up the road is ETERNAL GAIN!

Key Thought: We cannot let our motivation to work for the cause of Christ and let Christ have dominion over our life be dictated by the things we see around us. Looks can be deceiving! Our reward is not here on

earth...our reward is up the road at the end of our Christian journey...ETERNAL LIFE WITH THE FATHER AND HEARING HIM SAY "WELL DONE..."

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

GET-R-DONE

Scripture: James 1:22-25: ²³ For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴ For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵ But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The book of James is full of practical Christian wisdom, but is rather blunt in the dispensing of the information. This passage deals with the idea of not just listening to the Gospel, but putting feet to faith and becoming a living example of the Gospel.

Most Christians are full of good intentions, but good intentions do not get the job done. Good intentions are just that...intentions, not completed tasks or accomplishments. Every Sunday, churches across the world have people from all walks of life sitting on the pews, saying "Amen" (if they agree) or "Ouch" (if they feel the preacher is poking at them), but unfortunately, within hours, sometimes minutes of the benediction, all the things that made them feel convinced they are on the right track, or convicted they need to do better are forgotten until a later time.

I have found that most Christians desire to do better, but they have a problem with procrastination or hesitation. The procrastinators figure there is always a "tomorrow" on the horizon, but there is no guarantee "tomorrow" will come for them. How often do we hear about someone dying suddenly and no one has any idea what caused the death. How often do we hear about the person killed by a drunk driver or freak accident? Procrastination does not but make SURE whatever the intention was, it will never be!

Some people don't have a problem with procrastination, but they have a problem with hesitation. The hesitation may be based on a situation like Jonah...he felt it was not his job to do. The hesitation may be based on a situation like Moses...he felt inadequate for the task, or maybe even Gideon...obviously the wrong person was contacted. The reason does not matter, what matters is, hesitation has the same result as procrastination...NOTHING GETS DONE! God used a long list of people that seemed to be ill suited to the task, but in the end, they put their personal issues aside and GOT IT DONE!

We have to have an attitude of determination, dedication and concentration on whatever the task God has given to us to GET-R-DONE! The devil loves to remind us we by ourselves are not worthy to even call on the name of Jesus, but Jesus reminds us, so what, he is. Satan loves to look back and remind us of our mistakes, where God looks back for the saved and sees the cross. We can always come up with reasons why we can't do something for God, but we must focus on why we can...WE CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST, ESPECIALLY TO GLORIFY, MAGNIFY AND EDIFY HIM.

Key Thought: The next time we hesitate or procrastinate about doing something for the Lord, think about where we would be if in the Garden of Gethsemane he said "Later Dad! Let's see how they treat us first", instead of "NOT MY WILL, BUT THY WILL BE DONE!"

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

GOOD NEWS...WE WIN!

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6: ³*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:* ⁴*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds ;)* ⁵*Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;* ⁶*And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

The book of 2 Corinthians was written to encourage believers to be reconciled with the Apostle Paul, and reject the false apostles challenging his authority. These false apostles were creating dissension in the church. The selected scriptures deal with being a Christian during trying times. The practical application is to remember as believers, we are no longer constrained to the weaponry of the world, but by accepting Christ, we have access to superior firepower that trumps anything the world can throw at us!

Many of us love to watch competitive sports. We cheer when our favorite team scores and boo when the opponent is just as successful. When our team wins against insurmountable odds, we claim excellent strategy, good use of resources or the breaks went our way. When our team loses, we look to fault the referee, the coach, the players, and closely examine the strategy. The difference between winning and losing often boils down to the weapons or resources used. Christians are engaged in a spiritual battle on a daily basis. Unlike secular battles, ours is a battle of wills; the will of the Prince of the Earth and the Almighty God.

We are participants, willing or unwilling, with a bull's-eye on our back the minute we pledged our allegiance to God. Our opponent is not always visible, but the good thing we have on our side is we already know the outcome...we win! We still have to stay in the battle, because our efforts on the battlefield might lead someone else to Christ. We have to stay engaged, but how much we suffer comes down to a sound strategy and timing. We have to understand we might still be flesh and blood, but we have a divine weapons armory at our disposal that can obliterate anything not of God that stands before it. Proverbs tells us to Trust in the Lord and Lean not on our own understanding. Simply put, trust in God, and know the weapon he provides us trumps anything of the world every time!

Key Thought: Be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. God will take care of you!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

GRACE UNDER FIRE

Scripture: *Romans 1:16: ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

The main purpose of the epistle to the Romans is given by Paul in Romans 1:1, where he reveals that he is set apart by God for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, which he explains. He wishes to impart to the Roman readers a gift of encouragement and assurance in all that God has freely given them

Many times Christians, even experienced ones will shy away from sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This reluctance is not based on the intended audiences spoken declaration of “not being interested”, but based on society’s rules of what is considered to be “politically correct”. As a result, those we would call a “crazy praiser”, “Holy Roller” or “Bible Thumper” around other Christians become noticeably quiet when around non-believers. I am not advocating “force-feeding” the Gospel or being some animated with our “Holiness” it is unbelievable, but there should never be a question about whether a true Christian is different from those of the world.

Some people are reluctant to share the Gospel because they have been taught to hide their Christianity; in essence those who hide or run away will live to witness another day. They have been taught that if you witness at the wrong time to the wrong people, or even let them see you are believer too early, you will never be able to reach them, but the problem with this thought process is, a non-believer could easily think the Christian is not biding his or her time, but is actually ASHAMED of their beliefs. There is also one other element of hiding when it comes to the Gospel...some will use the Gospel as a mask to hide who they really are. Anyone can wear the Gospel as a mask for a certain amount of time, but ultimately, you will know who they really are by their fruits. If rotten fruit is displayed, then it becomes apparent the source was rotten...conversely, a totally bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Some will shine with the light of Jesus so bright it is almost blinding...when all things are going good. At the first sign of trouble, the light that shone so bright seems to have been prematurely and abruptly extinguished.

Those that truly are not ashamed, meaning truly believe in the power of the Gospel, shine all the time, but the level of their shine seems to intensify when troubles come and situations arise. They began to exhibit “Grace Under Fire”, or show the unmerited favor of God in their life, even when the world would say things are not going their way. These exhibitors of Grace Under Fire understands it rains on the just as well as the unjust, but more importantly in the end....every situation a believer goes through, God will bring them through for him to

be glorified, magnified and edified! Showing “Grace Under Fire” is not an easy thing to do, but it becomes a little easier when we remember a few things; We have to remember that we may be in this world, but not of this world. We have to remember he will never leave us nor forsake us. We have to remember God is bigger than anything we may face. f. We have to remember God can do all things, move all things, because he can control all things. We have to remember that although God may allow us to be brought to something, he will always bring you through that thing.

Key Thought: THE WILL OF GOD WILL NEVER TAKE YOU WHERE THE GRACE OF GOD CANT SAVE YOU!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

I SHALL NOT BE MOVED!

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14: ¹³ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all your things be done with charity.

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthian church is considered to be one of the most substantial books of the New Testament. This letter deals with potentially volatile issues effecting one of the largest, most important churches that the apostle helped to establish. The church was located in the middle of a booming metropolis, and was subjected to many different ideas about how the way of Christ and if the way of Christ fit in with the Corinthian life style.

Many of us face the same problem the Corinthians faced...trying to determine if a life for Christ is compatible with living in the world. The world's idea of what is acceptable runs counter to the command of loving God with all you have and loving your neighbor as yourself. We live in a "dog-eat-dog" world and we are told if you lag, you lose. We are also admonished to do unto others before they can do unto you. We have competing influences in our lives, but what makes it even harder are new religions popping up that seemed to have "New Knowledge" which tells us Jesus standards and the world's standards are compatible. We can be a Christian and still survive in the world using the ways of world. We are told in 2 Corinthians that although we walk in the flesh we no longer war as flesh. That means that as Christians, we live in the world, but we should no longer act worldly. The Bible tells us friendship with the world is enmity with God. We have to make a choice. Do we serve God, or serve the gods of the world. Scriptures tell us no man can serve two masters. I found out a long time ago, trying to be a Christian and trying to be a popular citizen of the world cannot work. I found I had to give more time to one over the other, and sooner or later the one I gave more time too made me have less time for the other. In the end, I chose God because I KNOW WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR ME, while the world gave me heartache after heartache, and untold pain.

The funny thing is, when I made up my mind Christ was the way for me, there many things and obstacles that suddenly popped up telling me I should rethink it. I decided to use my natural stubbornness and not let myself be moved, unless Christ said so, from my resolve of serving him until I am called home. I decided I would strive to show the love of Christ in all I do...even if it is the occasional tough love Christ showed when he ran the moneychangers out of the temple. I would show compassion and understanding, like Christ did for me. I remembered in spite of myself, he loved me anyway. From this resolve, I SHALL NOT BE MOVED! I decided when the winds and storms of life try to blow me down, I would stand firm on the solid rock of Christ. I would stay anchored in the Lord and from that, I SHALL NOT BE MOVED! I decided the devil can do his best. The world can bring her worst. Life can beat me like Clubber Lang beat Rocky Balboa in their first match; I would still stand my ground. I know that standing my ground may seem impossible sometimes, but stand I will and from this I SHALL NOT BE MOVED!

I Shall Not Be Moved (Cont...)

Key Thought: If we completely surrender ourselves to Christ, we no longer have to worry about anything. We can stand up for Christ no matter what may come our way. We can lean and depend on Jesus and easily say I SHALL NOT BE MOVED!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

IN IT TO WIN IT

Scripture: **Hebrews 12:1-2:** *¹Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ²Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

The theme of the book of Hebrews is confirms the superiority and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ as revealer and mediator of God's grace. The practical application of the overall theme is there can be no turning back or continuation in the old Jewish system. This system has been superseded by the unique priesthood of Christ. The book of Hebrews was written primarily to Jewish Christians who were familiar with the Old Testament and who

were being tempted to revert to Judaism or to Judaize the Gospel. It has been suggested the main recipients were from the large number of priests who became obedient to the faith. This scripture gives us encouragement to continue even though we live in discouraging times. It pushes us to stay in the fight, give our best and have the attitude we are **“In it to Win it!”**

Many of us are engaged in struggles daily. We have to go to work, and strive to give a 100%, even when we don't enjoy the job we do because of the old saying, “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go.” Perhaps our struggle may be with our spouse, who just doesn't seem to understand us. It could be that teenager, who has changed so much from that adorable baby, you wonder if this is the same child you birthed, or have they been taken over by aliens. Maybe it is a struggle at your place of worship, or simply a struggle with faith. These things are common, and Christ has paved the way for us, and can therefore identify with us. We can find encouragement in the idea that many have successfully endured the struggles before us, and are figuratively rooting us on to victory. We have to lay aside, drop, put down, cut loose, expel, expurgate, distance ourselves from anything that can slow us down from our goal...running toward Jesus in all we do and say, or put another way, the higher calling of Jesus Christ. We know we can do it, because Christ came down in human form, endured more than our worst nightmare and even though he could have said “no” he completed the race. Our race may seem to take forever, but we have to be patient, and at all times, stay focused on who we serve and who we want to be with...Jesus Christ the Lord!

Key Thought: In all our ways stay focused on Christ and run this Christian race not just as a participant, but be In it to Win it!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

IS MY LABOR IN VAIN?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:57-58: ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

As we look at this passage of scripture, we see these scriptures are a source of encouragement. In order to be encouraged, usually a person has faced, or is facing something that causes discouragement. Many Christians are aware of the scripture that encourages us to not weary in doing good, but when faced with the troubles of this world, not becoming weary seems to be an impossible task.

The world today seems to be filled with one problem after another. We wipe out one deadly disease and another takes its place. We help get one country stabilized, then another falls and needs the same type of help. In the Christian world, it would seem we take one step forward and end up taking three steps back. The very people you would think would promote Christ and want forward progress in the Kingdom building work seemed to view progress as pulling the spiritual knife, dug nine inches into the figurative back of the church, out a couple of inches and saying look at what I have done!

The average Christian still looks at things from the worldview instead of the "God View". When we look at things through the world view, it is easy to get discouraged and wonder if our labor is in vain. I see preachers, working just as hard as I am, but see no apparent change for the better in society. Are we laboring in vain? MOST ASSUREDLY NOT! We cannot become daunted by what we can see, but place our hope on what we can't see...the behind the scenes movement of the Holy Spirit. God is into details and we must remember if it seems nothing has changed, it could be God is preparing for a change that will blow our minds! He is crossing the "Ts" and dotting the "Is", so when the change comes it comes!

We must stay the course and diligently pursue the higher calling of Jesus Christ! We can't give up. Imagine if Christ said "Oh Well, they are not going to appreciate me anyway, so I might as well go on back to Heaven instead dealing with the wickedness on earth!" Christ did not give up...in spite of the beatings, maltreatment, hate, and even being nailed to the cross until it was beneficial for him to say "It is Finished" and "Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit!" We must not give in to the temptation to take the easy way as the rest of the world tries to convince us to do. Imagine if God took the easy way, after the flood, and decided to not to repopulate the earth? We would not be here now!

It's easy to want to give up, and give in...especially when faced with the realities of life and the things that happen in this old world. It's easy to want to give up and give in...especially when it seems the evil are rewarded and the good are penalized. It's easy to want to give up and give in when we think about what we have already been through and what we can potentially face. We must take heart! We must hold on! We must continue to hold up the bloodstained banner, because no matter what we face or endure now, **IN THE END WE WIN!**

Is my Labor In Vain (cont...)

Key Thought: No matter how the world may try to convince us our efforts for Christ are in vain, fear not. Only what we do for Christ will last, it is not in vain, and we will be rewarded for our efforts! We will be able to hear our Master say "Well done..."

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?



NOTES:

IT IS NOT ABOUT YOU!

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-12 (KJV): ¹¹ *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;* ¹² *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

The book of Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul. It is debated whether Paul wrote the letter specifically for the church at Ephesus or for everyone that would read it, but the one thing that can be agreed upon was the purpose. Paul wanted to encourage his readers, and strengthen them with knowledge he had learned firsthand following Christ.

A look at this passage of scripture shows some specific spiritual gifts mentioned and it would appear Paul is making a distinction amongst them; not only by the order listed, but some would say if it is not listed, then is not a spiritual gift. There may be differences in what gifts God may have given, but that is a minor issue compared to the major issue; are the gifts being used for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry and the edifying the body of Christ.

Apostles are generally known for starting and planting the seed of a church. They may or may not stay to lead the church that was planted. Prophets not only tell what God will do, but what God is doing right now. Evangelist spread the Good News whether from the pulpit, the pew, the street corner to the filled to capacity stadium. Pastors shepherd the flock and teachers teach. These definitions are just working definitions and are not perfect, but the fact remains ALL of these gifts are for the good of the body.

I have been chastised because I did not give a title when I introduced myself. I believe that those that have proven their worth by their actions will automatically be given a title of honor. Scriptures tell us quite often people called Jesus teacher, or Lord when they had not personally experience anything he had done.

Many people get quite offended if you do not acknowledge the “Gift” they believed God has bestowed upon them. I believe if we spend more time “EXERCISING” our gifts, instead of “TALKING” about our gifts, we may discover people will readily recognize and acknowledge our “GIFT.” When we focus on CHRIST and the BODY of CHRIST, (instead of self) God is glorified, Christ is magnified and edified!

Key Thought: The gift listed in Ephesians 4:11 are considered the “Five-fold” ministry or generic categories of ministries, but there are numerous forms of ministry that fall underneath them. Don’t feel if you can’t

“CLAIM” a title, you are of no use; the title is not important, what is important is the work you are doing for God, with the people of God, to add to the KINGDOM of GOD!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

IT WON'T WORK

Scripture: Isaiah 54:14-17: ¹⁴ *In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.* ¹⁵ *Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.* ¹⁶ *Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.* ¹⁷ *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.*

A popular Gospel singer by the name of Fred Hammond sings a song titled “No Weapon Formed Against Me”, or a title similar to that (dependent on how you google it), that speaks to the sentiment found in Isaiah 54:17. This sentiment is echoed by him saying “No weapon formed against me, shall prosper, it won’t work”.

As we look at this passage of scripture, we are all familiar with the idea of worldly weapons formed against the children of God not being able to work. We understand being protected against the instruments of mayhem and malice found in society today may touch our body but not our spirit when in the family of the most high God. We know these things, but we seldom think about why these weapons won’t work.

I have found when I understand why I should not be worried about a situation or circumstance helps me a lot more than someone simply telling me not to worry. You see I have always believed in this scripture, as I do the complete word of God, but I have always been concerned if there was something I was supposed to be doing or not doing in addition to serving and worshipping God, in spirit and in truth for this “protection” to happen.

One day I actually read the scriptures before this promise and discovered the weapons forged against me won’t work because God created those who forge the weapons, and those to do destruction, which means as with everything else, he is in control. It reminds me of Passover, and how the blood of the lamb on doorposts told the Angel of Death this was a house to “Passover”. Our inheritance for those who love, serve, and are a member in good standing in the family and fellowship of God...or at least striving to be with the power of the Holy Spirit (smile), they don’t have to worry, just focus on what God has called them to do. No weapon, schemes, machinations, lies, subterfuge, misdirection, illusion or anything else the world can conjure will work because God is the creator of all and can ensure that those that stand for him are inoculated by the Holy Spirit, the work of his Son, on the cross and now, along with his love, grace, mercy and righteousness are protected against the ways and schemes of the world. In short, the world may come at a child of the most high God with their best, but GOD said...Bring it on, try your best but I will tell you now, against my child, IT WON’T WORK!

Key Thought: When we focus on the will and the way of the Father, in all we do, it does not matter what others will try to do, or even say. What matters is what God has done, is doing and will do for the spiritual protection of his children. A mother protecting her child from harm has nothing on God protecting his children from spiritual harm in this world!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

I WON'T COMPLAIN!

Scripture: James 1:1-4 (KJV): *1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. 2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

James, the reported brother of Jesus is credited with writing the book of James. This letter is written, as stated in the salutation, to the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad. This letter is full of practical, no nonsense Christian wisdom, but this passage deals with how to handle troubles from a Christian perspective.

No one likes going through things. Problems that cannot be immediately solves takes us from our comfort zone, and often makes us feel things are completely out of control because we cannot get control. We feel

things are completely out of order because we do not have the ability to restore order...at least enough order so we can gain control and direct the situation to what WE believe is a logical conclusion.

James tells us situations, problems, circumstances, issues all can come together to build our faith and develop our patience, and when our faith and patience is developed we can find ourselves not IN WANT, but not having WANT of anything.

This seems easier said than done becomes who welcomes problems in their life. An unknown author stated in an exposition of scripture that problems can serve five basic functions in a Christian's life; correction, direction, inspection, protection and perfection.

A problem comes along and we are handling the situation all wrong. As the problems increase, we discover the CORRECT way to do it, instead of the way we have been doing it. As we get CORRECTION, we start seeing which way we should go, and as a result get DIRECTION. As we go along, and know we are doing the right thing, but it doesn't get immediately easier we are faced with a choice...continue the path we know the Lord has for us or give up. The answer shows how committed we are to God, and we find ourselves in a state of INSPECTION...do we really trust God or just say we do. Sometimes when you are trying to do something and every door seems slammed it might be a totally different situation. The situation could be God is trying to PROTECT you from something that is not in line with His will and His way. He may still allow you to do it, but it will be clear it was your choice and not his plan.

If nothing else, I have found when troubles come my way, I trust God more and more. My own control surrenders to God's control. My will and way gets lost in HIS will and way. I find myself having the impurities of old happens burned off and I am being molded into what God would have me to be, which puts me one step closer to God's PERFECTION he has planned for me in my life.

Key Thought: God knows his plans for you. Don't look at problems as obstacles, but opportunities to grow spiritually and for God to show up and show out in your life!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

JESUS, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD!

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (KJV): ⁵⁵ *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*
⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The book of 1st Corinthians is Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. The church experienced difficulties with maintaining a Christian community. They were surrounded by so many competing "religious" type influences, to include a center of worship for the goddess Aphrodite. This "center" involved a high degree of sexual perversion, such that Corinthian became a word for loose living. Paul addressed and hoped to remedy some of the problems within the Corinthian church and encourage them that living for Christ was not in vain. Our passage today deals with a subject that many are concerned about in today's times, with wars and rumors of wars...DEATH!

We often forget our perceptions of death are born from a time before we believed. Once we became a believer, death should hold no fear for us, or have power over us. Jesus put death where it belongs...back in the grave. Jesus in essence redesigned the purpose for death; death went from being the end of life to a transition point to eternal life for those that believe. Those that don't...well that is a whole different story.

Today we celebrate our "Resurrected Savior" but coming back from the dead is not the only thing he did...not by a long shot. Christ in essence took away the sting, fear, mystery, concerns, and so many more things that come to mind about death, and told us...don't worry, been there, done that, and not only am I here with you now, I will see you on the other side.

Christ made sure everyone knew he was “resurrected”, but by doing that he also let everyone know death had experienced...a MONUMENTAL DEFEAT in the lives of the believer. A believer never has to worry about life after death, because Jesus shows us an image how we may be glorified to be with him...when the time comes. The believer knows it doesn’t matter if we are transformed in a twinkling of an eye, have to wait until the dead in Christ rises, or wait until the rapture; the bottom line up front is, Christ is alive, wrestled death to the mat, and got the victorious...1-2-3. **JESUS, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD!**

Key Thought: We have no need to fear death as a believer; it is just a transition, from this life to the time we are to be glorified with Jesus. Jesus removed the “Sting” of death with his Resurrection.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

MINISTRY IN A CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE!

Scripture: Ephesians 4:4-6 (NIV): *4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

The book of Ephesians, although debated in some theological circles if it was actually written for the church at Ephesus, was written by the Apostle Paul. The purpose, no matter whom it may have been written to, was one of encouragement and strength.

I attended a church training class and the instructor appointed a class president. Our class president was a spirit-filled lady named Tracie Brown from Daphne, Alabama. I discovered this humble, jovial lady was a dynamic speaker when she shared a little sermonette, about the ministry in the chocolate chip cookie. I love chocolate chip cookies, but never thought of food having anything to do with ministry other than a means of fellowship, or the elements during communion.

There are many different types of chocolate chips used in chocolate chip cookies. The chocolate can be dark, white, super-sweet, semi-sweet, Belgian, German, and the list can go on and on.

Ms. Brown explained the chocolate chips represent the diversity we all bring when we come to Christ...our backgrounds, beliefs, and life experiences. We have cracked a few eggs of bad experience, enjoyed the milk of human kindness, the holding power of flour, the sweetness of sugar and the wonderfulness of the chocolate chip, but there are two things missing for this thing to all work and make something good out of what would just be a royal mess.

All of things have to be mixed together and placed just right on the cookie sheet. Heat has to be applied...not too much to burn, but not too little that the cookie doesn't fully cook. We see these agents put together by the Master Chef not only stick together but develop into a delicious treat because in the midst of the heat, a bond was developed that kept everything together. The cookie sheet is the world, God is the Master Chef, the heat is problems and **JESUS HOLDS EVERYTHING TOGETHER. JESUS IS THE DOUGH THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER WITHOUT REGARD TO THE CHIP FLAVOR OR THE HEAT APPLIED!**

Key Thought: The next time you enjoy a chocolate chip cookie, think about the work that went into preparing that cookie, then think about what the Master Chef has placed in you to be a "delectable" joy to someone else!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

NO MORE EXCUSES!

Scripture: Hebrews 4:14-16 (KJV): ¹⁴ *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* ¹⁵ *For we have not an high priest which cannot*

be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The author of the book of Hebrews is unknown, but is believed to have been written by the Apostle Paul. The book of Hebrews gives a clear view of Christ, what he endured for us and a sharper image of the Lord Jesus more clearly than any other portion of scriptures.

Christians often come up with “excuses” why they are not doing or can’t do certain things for the advancement of God’s kingdom. One “excuse” is a person may feel they are not strong enough. Being a Christian is not an easy task. If being a Christian was easy, there would probably be a lot more. Christians are subjected to all types of temptations that the non-Christian would not even give a second thought. As a result, a Christian may feel weak and ready to give up and give in, but we really don’t have an excuse not to hold on and hold out. Christ understands our weakness. Christ was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity...chastised, beaten and debased because he showed and promoted love. Christ could have easily given up, but he didn’t. He held on until his work was complete before he commended his spirit into the hands of the Father. We have an advantage because Christ has already suffered worse than we could ever imagine, and he is with us every step of the way of our Christian journey to strengthen and encourage us.

We must also remember Christ withstood all temptations we could ever face, three general ones that cover pleasing the flesh, testing God and riches and glory. Christ withstood these temptations with the word of God and we too can withstand these same temptations. The Bible says we can do all things through Christ that strengthen us, and withstanding temptations does just that. As we hold out and withstand temptations that come our way, in spite of how easy it would be to give in, we know with the power of the Lord, other things that come our way can also be withstood. If we give in, we have no excuse.

Sometimes we know Jesus has withstood countless things and is there to help us and encourage us, but we wonder if he truly understands us and the situation we are going through. If we truly surrender all to Jesus, he can strengthen us when we feel weak. Not only is the grace of God sufficient for whatever we might face, but his strength is made PERFECT in OUR weakness. There is no temptation we can face that Christ has not already withstood, gave us an example to follow and also provides a way of escape if we just don’t think we can hold out from giving in. The problem is, when he gives us a way out, we have to be looking for it and TAKE IT. Christ helps us through our concerns, which is only fair since he knows the perfect plan that he has for us, and when we go to him, we discover that all things work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

Key Thought: It is real easy to come up with excuse to not fully serve and commit to God, but if we truly want to experience the full glory of God we must adopt an attitude of “NO MORE EXCUSES”!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?



How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

P.U.S.H. (Press Until Something Happens)!

Scripture: Philippians 3:13-14 (KJV): ¹³ *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,* ¹⁴ *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

The Apostle Paul is unanimously credited with writing the book of Philippians. Paul appears to have written this letter while in prison. In this passage of scripture, Paul is not saying he has forgotten his sinful past, but he is leaving the past in the past to focus on future glories. The prize Paul seeks is everlasting glory; not found on earth, but in heaven with Christ.

A few years ago there was a popular phrase called “P.U.S.H. Pray Until Something Happens”. The idea was, when faced with a less than desirable situation, the believer was to P.U.S.H. their way through the situation until things got better. There is no doubt that prayer changes things, but the question I have always had is this... “What do I do in the meantime while waiting on God’s perfect timing to answer my prayer?” I have discovered when I pray, I still have to press toward the mark of the higher calling of Jesus Christ. Just because things are not how I would like them to be, and I have prayed for a change, that does not give me the right to take a “spiritual time out” until God answers my prayer. Imagine if Jesus decided to just pray, and not do anything until he got the answer HE wanted from the Father in the garden of Gethsemane. I shudder at the thought of how my life would be, but because even though Christ prayed, and did not get the ideal response, he still pressed toward the mark, the finish the line, the objective, the goal of what the Father wanted him to do on the cross.

There are times that happen in a believer’s belief that make it difficult to stay focused and continue to press toward the goal the Lord has set for us. Sometimes this problem is caused by our failure to let go of the past. If he we continue to hang on to the past, we will not be able to receive or enjoy what God has for us in our present and the preparation he is doing within us for our future. We look at Paul and see he did not forget his past, after all, we are the sum total of our experiences...how we reacted and prayerfully the mistakes we learned from. Paul used his past to help him reach for his future. We can do the same. We look back over what we used to be, and what should be our state without Christ, then do a comparison of our life WITH Christ, and we see there really is nothing to compare. We begin to understand what Christ meant when he said he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

Instead of feeling sorry for ourselves, ashamed of our past, or letting it hold us back; we should use it as a springboard to catapult us into our present and future. We have a choice. When we are faced with a situation that we don’t like, is uncomfortable, or may be downright scary, we can give up. We can stand down. We can decide there is no use, or...we can PRESS until something happens! We can press through our situation. We can press through our problems. We can press toward the higher calling of Jesus Christ!

P.U.S.H (Press Until Something Happens) Cont...

Key Thought: If we keep our eyes focused on Jesus it makes it so much easier to PRESS toward the mark of what Jesus is calling us to do!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?



How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

PROUD TO BE A CHRISTIAN!

Scripture: Romans 1:16-17 (KJV): ¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* ¹⁷ *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.*

The book of Romans is considered to be the Apostle Paul's greatest work. Paul presents Christ as the second Adam, whose righteousness and substitutionary death provided justification for all who place faith in Him.

There are few people who have not heard about Christ's death, burial and resurrection and what it signifies. Though some may not fully understand the entire concept of Christ's "cross work", and all that goes with it, it is generally understood that this same work should be a catalyst for change in the Christian.

New Christians feel the wonderworking power of Christ in their life, but as with anything, if the fire is not continually stoked through prayer, bible study, Sunday school, and assembling regularly with other believers, the fire will slowly die, and go from being something to be proud of, to something spoke about with likeminded audiences.

A true Christian would never flat out deny Christ, but how often have we given the appearance of being "ashamed" of Christ and the Good News because of our actions, our inactions? How many times have we been

more concerned about what someone may say about our Christianity than focusing on being “Christ-like” in all we do? Contrary to popular belief, Christians can have fun; Christ loved to fellowship as he developed relationships. Christians can get angry; look what Christ did in the temple when He saw how it was being defiled by the money changers. Christians can love and be saddened...remember Jesus wept outside Lazarus’s tomb. At the end of the day, we will be held accountable for not only what we have done, but what we have failed to do.

I am a Christian through and through and will not be held down, knocked down, scared or fear representing Christ in all I do. At times I may fall short, but I keep moving toward Christ I am PROUD to tell the WORLD I AM A CHRISTIAN, and definitely not ASHAMED, but EXCITED, ECSTATIC and PROUD of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE POWER IT HAS UNTO SALVATION! Are You?

Key Thought: The Good News is something to share, not hide. We don’t have to be eloquent of speech; all we have to do is just tell the “STORY” so God gets the GLORY!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

SOMEBODY'S AT THE DOOR

Scripture: Revelation 3:7-12 (KJV): ⁷ *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;* ⁸ *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* ⁹ *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.* ¹⁰ *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.* ¹¹ *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* ¹² *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

Many times in my life I have found myself in situations where I, as an afterthought, inquired of the Lord what he would have me do. I realized that if I had asked him “beforehand”, I could have saved myself a lot of heartache and pain. I know Jeremiah 29:11 tells me God knows the plans he has for me, but everyone now and then I try to “Be Grown” and mold his plans to my plan. I have discovered that doesn’t work to well. When God has a plan for you, He takes care of details that I would never even think about! I have heard it said the devil is into details. Well, I know where he learned that from. As I look back over a given situation, I found myself asking the Lord what I should do because I realize he has been guiding toward a certain path the whole time...a path towards the perfect divine will for me, and away from his permissive will. I discover things that should be a “slam dunk” become impossible because the door gets slammed shut! There is no discernible reason other than now is not the town. I purposely obtained to diverse degrees with the idea I would easily be able to become an adjunct professor. The degrees in Christian Ministry and Public/Justice Administration happened quickly and teaching jobs abounded until the doors slammed shut. I now know that perhaps God had a bigger plan in mind.

I have seen God’s hand open doors that would otherwise be closed. God has shown my wife and I opened doors that MAN tried hard to weld shut! God opened the doors, and we know they will REMAIN open until he says otherwise. It can be confusing to know when God closes a door or opens the door, but I have found it often starts with someone knocking at the door...the door of our heart.

Many time we put the “No Solicitation” sign outside our home so we want be bothered, and we often do the same with Jesus. We hear someone knocking at the door of our physical house, usually when we have just got comfortable and decide we don’t want to be bothered. We don’t answer the door. Jesus knocks on the door of

our physical house and if he asks us to step out of our comfort zone, we treat him the same way and nicely remind him of the “No Solicitation” sign. We must remember, as we look at our blessings, the Lord opened the door, and when people tried to unsuccessfully harm us, he is the one that closed the door. Perhaps “No Solicitation” is fine for our physical house, but in our spiritual, make sure it does not apply to Jesus!

Somebody’s Knocking at the Door (cont..)

Key Thought: Christ tells us behold he stands at the door and knock...why don’t we go ahead and let him in!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

SPEAK LIFE!

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-6 (KJV): *37 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³ He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath^[a] enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"*

This passage of scripture is one the best known prophecies by the prophet Ezekiel. God's promise of a new heart and a new spirit echoes the prophet Jeremiah's covenant promise found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Ezekiel is shown by the Lord that even when dry bones seem to have all life sucked out of them, the Lord has the POWER to put life back into a seemingly hopelessly dead situation.

This passage speaks to us today as we go about dealing with the issues of life and sometimes feeling most things we have to deal with are lost causes. We give up on our marriage because what used to be one has now split into two with separate thoughts and ideas. We look toward divorce because the marriage seems dead. We give up on our children because they never listen to what we say, so what is the point...they are determined to destroy their lives so we might as well prepare for the funeral. We look at all the plans we had for our life and nothing has come to pass; so why do we keep trying. We are in a dead in job, with no prospects. We feel we are no longer living...just existing until the day we breathe our last breath and can rest in the ground.

We can wallow in the valley if we want, but I have discovered the devil responds to prayers, where God answers prayers. If you speak death to your marriage, the devil will do everything in his power to make it die. If you speak death to the future of your child, the devil will work overtime to make it come to pass. If you speak death to your present and prospects for the future, the devil will make it his personal mission to make your belief become a reality if to no one else but you. He will work hard to make these things come to pass because you have spoken death to these situations and he does not want you to know, and cannot afford for you to know, that just like Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, through the power of God you can SPEAK LIFE to each situation in your life.

Your marriage seems about to die...SPEAK LIFE and get back to the design God intended for marriage...a partnership working together with clearly defined roles. No one is a doormat, but are welcome mats for the glory of God.

Your child's future seems hopeless? Think about the power of a praying parent, a parent that prays for the child to be dedicated and used for the glory of God and not to just follow blindly what the parents wants...SPEAK LIFE.

Speak Life (cont...)

You feel that all hope is dead for your future? SPEAK LIFE to your situation and follow the scriptures... "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and HE WILL direct thy path."

Just as people can speak about bad things and wait for them to happen, we have the



ability to speak Godly things in our lives, and when our prayers and desires line up with God's plans for our lives...there is no limit to what God will do and can do in and with our lives!

Key Thought: We must stop speaking death in our life and start, in the power of God, SPEAKING LIFE TO ALL OUR SITUATIONS!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE BAIT OF SATAN

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 (KJV): *4 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. ² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. ³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. ⁵ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. ⁸ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. ¹¹ Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

We have all heard sermons, been taught, and maybe even read the story of how the devil tried to tempt Jesus. We also know Jesus resisted Satan, and the devil had to ultimately flee. We hear this story and think about the example Christ set for us, but sometimes we miss the true tactics of the devil. We know he is a tempter, but we often forget he is also an accuser and deceiver. If we look at this passage of scripture closely, we can easily see the devil attempting to taunt and test Jesus, while attempting to distort the truth.

The devil uses the same tactic with us. We often mistakenly believe he will try and tempt us with something that we should be able to easily refuse. We are mistaken. Why would you tempt someone with a cheeseburger who has just gorged themselves on a seven course meal? This tactic would not be effective. Now if we take this same scenario and taunt someone, there might be a different result. We all have heard about the famous 72 ounce steak challenge, and how if someone can finish one, the meal is free. A person cannot be tempted to just sit down and eat something that big, but if you appeal to their vanity and say... "You can't do it or you are too chicken to do it", the end result changes. Satan will try to test your limits to see how far he can go. After he has taunted an alcoholic, gambler, drug user, or whatever the former affliction may be they are too afraid to see if God has really changed them, he will then convince them to try a "test" to see if the supposed change occurred. The alcoholic will go into a bar and see if he cannot order a drink. The drug user will talk to her former associates under the guise of "helping them" kick the habit. Satan has taunted them into taking the test, and then he distorts the truth. He causes them to get a distorted view of themselves, and as a result, they start to believe no change has occurred. He will taunt them into reading numerous self-help books on the power of prayer, the Holy Spirit, fasting, etc., while meanwhile convincing them the "truth" is they are not worthy to associate with REAL Christians. As a result, he moves them away from the path God has for them, into the path he has chosen for them, and then...he accuses them of never having changed, deceives them into thinking they can never change, and causes them to forget the TRUTH. Jesus is the way, the TRUTH and THE LIFE. With Jesus all things are possible, but without him is the only way a person is guaranteed to fail. Satan dangles the bait, hoping we will bite, but Jesus is the truth and shows us how to avoid the devil's hook!

Key Thought: In all our ways acknowledge him and HE WILL direct our paths.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

***Scripture:** Isaiah 55:1-11: 55 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. ³ Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. ⁴ Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. ⁵ Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. ⁶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: ¹¹ So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Many of us spend an inordinate amount of time on things that in the end don't really matter. We try to find things to slake our thirst and nothing seems to get the job done. This thirst might be a physical thirst or a spiritual thirst. We try Coke, Sprite, Dr. Pepper and discover although they are quite tasty, you are still thirsty. You attack your spiritual thirst by skydiving, mountain climbing, maybe even Sumo wrestling, but still you are not satisfied. No matter what we try, we will never be satisfied with things of the earth or things created by

man. We were created to be in relationship with God, therefore, until we have a meaningful relationship with him, we will always be “unsatisfied”. Some people develop a relationship with God but still feel something is missing. There just might be and the answer could be as simple as looking in the mirror...if there is less Christ looking back at you, than you...YOU COULD BE THE MISSING ELEMENT!

We often give most of ourselves to Christ, but keep a little for ourselves. We never fully commit and wonder why we don't have the same euphoric feeling others we know seem to experience. We must TRULY seek the Lord, not half-heartedly look.

Key Thought: Many people think they have an eternity to get to know God for themselves. There is a problem with that belief; if we don't seek the Lord while HE may be found, we could find ourselves spending an ETERNITY wishing we had found him sooner!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE THREE SNARES!

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-16 (KJV): ¹⁴ *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;* ¹⁵ *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

¹⁶ *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

The authorship of the book of Revelation has been credited to the beloved disciple and Apostle John. Many Christians are afraid of the book of Revelation, but actually the book is a cause of celebration because in the end, WE (the Believers) WIN! This particular passage speaks about a host of issues, but speaks about three specific “**SNARES**” which can cause a Christian to be held back in true service to God; being too hot, too cold, or lukewarm.

We have all heard the story of Goldilocks and three bears. We have heard variations, but usually it starts with a little girl, trying to find her way and stumbling upon a cottage belonging to three bears. Goldilocks goes in and finds something to eat. She tries one, but it is too hot. The next too cold and the last one she tries is just right for her. That is fine for Goldilocks, but we as Christians have to make sure that our “**JUST RIGHT**” is ordained and blessed by God and not what we have decided is “**JUST RIGHT**” for what we are willing to do in the name of Christ for the cause of Christ.

Being “**HOT**” or on fire for the Lord is great! The problem is we must let that fire be used and focused by the Lord. Fire in the right hands can be used for clearing away impurities, a light in a time of darkness and warmth in times of coldness. Fire left unchecked burns and destroys. A Christian, controlled by the Holy Spirit will use their spiritual fire to stoke or ignite fire in others. A spiritual fire controlled by man will ultimately destroy. Being “**COLD**” can make people feel comfortable if you use the word to take the heat of the world from their spirit, but often our “cold” is one of detachment, lacking warmth, compassion, empathy or sympathy. Cold used judiciously can be refreshing, but misused can be deadly. Lastly, the idea of being “**JUST RIGHT**” or “**LUKEWARM**”. Being “just right” might be more palatable, but the just right for us may not be in line with what is “Just Right” for the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11 tells me the Lord knows the plans he has for me, and his plans may call for me to be on fire when I feel more comfortable being a smoldering ember. The other issue with being “just right” is we easily become complacent and feel we are doing just what we need to do because we have spiritually “arrived” to the goal God had in store with us. We believe this because in our comfort, we fail to check with the person that the “Comforter” originated from. We may believe we are “Good-to-Go”, but our assessment means absolutely nothing; only God’s assessment matters!

Christians must always be aware that Holy Spirit controlled heat is desirable; coldness is only appropriate when called for to refresh, rebuke, correct, as dictated by the Lord. Lukewarm may be desirable in some soups or other foods, but usually, as with the case in scripture, you just want to “Spit it Out” and have nothing to do with it. Jesus is the “anti-snare” remedy. Let’s give him free reign of our life and avoid the snares of being too hot, too cold or just lukewarm for Christ and the cause of Christ!

The Christian and the Three Snares (cont...)

Key Thought: God is coming back for a church without a spot or wrinkle. Do we really want to be considered lukewarm or cold for the Lord when we see the “passion” Christ had for us in his death, burial and resurrection?

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE CHRISTIAN'S WEAPONS OF WAR

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6: ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; ⁶ And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

As we look at this passage of scripture, we see that although we may have to fight battles in the world, we don't fight like members of the world. We often forget that in terms of our citizenship, Christians are spiritual resident aliens, with Citizenship in heaven. We may live here, and follow the rules that do not contradict God's laws for living, but our home is in heaven.

An examination of this passage tells us we still walk in the flesh, or with the trappings of humanity, but the Holy Spirit dwelling within us takes us beyond the boundaries of mere mortal flesh. We no longer fight as a mere human, using man made weaponry to wage war, but we have access to a weapons armory that trumps anything man could create.

Man's weapons may destroy property, even kill the body, but the weapons of a Christian goes beyond the physical and deals with the negative things that need to be destroyed in the spiritual. A person that has a problem with drugs can have that stronghold in their life destroyed through the power of our triune God. A person that feels useless can be useful in the higher calling of Jesus Christ.

The Christian weapons of war takes care of all the reported successes of the enemy and negates all the reasons we are told we should just give up, God is not in control and we are wasting our time. The Christian arsenal not only defeats the weapons of this world, but can bring in every stray thought, plan, scheme or issue in line with the word of God and obedience to the cause of Christ. Look at Saul. He was a powerful persecutor of Christianity, and through his Damascus road experience became one of the most powerful and influential promoters of Christianity.

In essence we must ensure we are not tricked into trying to fight a worldly fight. The world has the home field advantage and will use every secret we have against us to win. The world does not fight with a code of honor, or dignity, but believes in victory over us by any means necessary! The world will try to make us forget that when we accepted Christ into our life, we are no longer of this world, even though we have come from this world...or did we. The Bible says we become a new creature in Christ and the former things pass away.

The easiest, yet sometimes hardest thing for us to do is remember who the creator of the world...God is. God knows the intended use for everything and person, and also when things are not operating as they should. God also knows when things should be given an opportunity to self-correct or should be taken out to pasture and put down. God knows all, see all, can be everywhere and can do all! We don't even have to seek revenge for wrongs done to us, vengeance is mine saith the Lord!

The Christian's Weapons of War (cont...)

Key Thought: The enemy wants us to think we have to fight the way he fights...dirty. As believers, we have access to spiritual weaponry that acts like an atomic bomb compared to the world's firecracker. We just need to lean and depend on God and he will direct our path!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?



How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE CROSSOVER STEP

Scripture: *Joshua 3:1-14: 3 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. 2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp, 3 giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits^[a] between you and the ark; do not go near it.” 5 Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.” 6 Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them. 7 And the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. 8 Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan’s waters, go and stand in the river.’” 9 Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. 10 This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. 11 See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. 12 Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. 13 And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”*

¹⁴ So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵ Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, ¹⁶ the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

This passage of scriptures involves the Israelites making a “cross over step” into the promised land. The Israelites have been set up for success, the way has been paved, and God has even given signs to show they are set to cross over into the promised land...all they have to do is JUST DO IT! Many times, God has made provisions for us to cross over into our promised land. We must understand, when God has made the promise, gone before us, and told us to “crossover”, we will not have anything in our path we cannot overcome to get to the destination God has purposed for us. The only entity that can stop us from being all God has called us to be, doing all God has called us to be, and going where God has called us to go is US!

Key Thought: We must be prepared for the promise, believe in the promise and then go ahead and cross over into the promises of God! What is the promise? Whatever God has spoken into your life; embrace it and cross over into it!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE DAY THAT DEATH DIED

Scriptures: **1 Corinthians 15:55-57** (KJV): ⁵⁵ *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* ⁶ *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As we look at these scriptures we see the subject is death! The subject is not so much about who died, but about what happened to the power death held over the head of believers. These scriptures appear to poke fun at death since a true believer may not rush to meet death, but no longer has a fear of death because of the “cross” work of Christ! We all know that Christ was born, bled and died for our sins. We all know that He rose on the third day, as promised, but we sometimes forget is the significance of his resurrection. Of course HE defeated death, but by his life, death and resurrection He exhibited his power over man, power over life and power over death.

Christ never attended a university or even set at the feet of the great theology teacher as Paul did, but He could look at someone and say “Come”, and they did. Christ could decide when men could actually touch him, or not touch him, based on the circumstances. We see numerous incidents where He slipped through unscathed through the crowd, and even walked with the men on the Emmaus road and they had no idea who he was. Jesus had and still has the power to help men see and do all things when they turn their lives over to him. The power of Jesus in a man’s life is only limited by how much the man allows Jesus’ power to operate in his life.

Jesus himself stated He came to provide life more abundantly. The New Testament is filled with accounts of how Jesus broke the literal and spiritual bread of life. There are countless stories of how Christ healed a person or situation with a touch, or spoken word, giving the person or group a people a new lease on life, or a continuance of something good. There are too many situations to count where people knew if they could just hear him, see him, touch him or just be near him, there life would be changed for the better. Jesus did not live as others did, but he paved the way to a better standard of living...living the life God intended for us all.

The Lord not only showed his power over man and life, but Jesus showed many times death was not His boss. In fact, if anything, He bossed death. We see the story of how Jesus took a little girl’s hand and helped her up from her deathbed. We see how a widow’s son was raised from the dead by the word of Jesus. We all know

how Jesus told Lazarus to come out of the grave, and even though he had been dead FOUR DAYS, Lazarus came out in obedience to the word of the Lord. Knowing that if Jesus can command someone who had been dead for four days to live, it should not come as a surprise that overcoming three days in the grave should be no great feat for Jesus. Armed with this information, there are still people who question Jesus' power over death.

The Day That Death Died (cont...)

Some question if he really died. Some explain his alleged power over death as being the result of him passing out and being revived by the cool stone of the tomb. There are others that claim his death was an illusion, brought on by mass hysteria of the masses. There are yet some who claim the disciples and women lied about his resurrection. All of the disciples, except for John died a horrible and painful death, and they tried to kill the beloved disciple by boiling him in oil. Who would die a painful death for a lie? No one! When we look at the hard cold facts, we see, medically speaking Christ should have died long before He got to the cross, based on what He endured! The flogging would have killed most. The beating would have killed others. The trek to the cross and the ultimate nailing on the cross would have killed those that remained, but yet Jesus decided when He would die, and when He decided to die, he stated in John 19:30.. "IT IS FINISHED". All the work he came to do, prior to His DEATH WAS DONE...ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS WHAT WAS TO FOLLOW; His display of power and mastery over death or in essence this was the day that death DIED! Put another way, the day that the fear and power of death was put in the grave to replace the body of Christ as He came out, showing His resurrection makes our resurrection with him a guaranteed thing at the date and time appointed by the Father.

If we looked at what happened that day on the cross, and what happened once Jesus commended His spirit into the hands of the Father, we could say Christ went down to the grave and laid the Holy smackdown on death. Not only did Death submit to Christ, but he released any hold he may have thought he had on believers. When Jesus said it is finished, we no longer had to wait on someone, something, some time, or some perfect condition to go to the Father, all we have to do is go through the SON. When Jesus said it is finished, he took the pain, the sting from death...yanked the victory from his grasp, and I could imagine him saying....Where O' Death is your Victory, Where O' death is your sting? Death died that day, at least for the believer, and to make sure everyone knew death had been knocked out, taken out, rubbed out, killed...Jesus rose early that Sunday morning and got on with the getting on.

Jesus began to go about making sure all knew death had died, not because death wasn't powerful, but not powerful enough to keep him in the grave, or keep anyone else from the love of God. Jesus provided evidence of his resurrection with at least seven things...

1. The empty tomb; **2.** The Holy Women witnesses (No ancient authors would have used women as witnesses if it was not true.); **3.** The new found courage of the Apostles; **4.** The changed lives of James and the others, (James, Jesus brother began to believe and became a courageous church leader, along with others that began to walk by faith and not by sight); **5.** Over 500 witness saw the risen Jesus at the same time; **6.** The conversion of Saul to Paul and; **7.** The horrible deaths of the disciples because of their refusal to renounce their faith and claim that the resurrection of Jesus was a fake or hoax.

Key Thought: The religious leader of the day, and Death himself thought Jesus was defeated, but they ended up not only wrong but being "DEATHLY" wrong. *In case you didn't know it, **NOTHING** can separate a believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"!*

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE EXHIBITION OF S.W.A.G. (Saved With Amazing Grace)!

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8-10: ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

There is a word we hear from the young people today called SWAG. I have discovered SWAG is short for SWAGGER, which denotes a certain type of style. This word used to mean an accessory to window treatments in my dictionary; a word I learned from my wife as she decorated the various military houses we lived in. Swag

took on a new meaning for me one morning, after numerous medical induced absences from work, when a “Seasoned Saint” made a comment to me about my swag.

This lady, named Mrs. Ruth Wingate, is as sweet as she can be, and has been given the unofficial work title of “Mom”. She told me one morning she was glad to see me and I seemed to have gotten my “swag” back. I never knew I had “swag”, and over the next few days, I came to understand how worried she had been about me. About this time last year, I had a medical procedure that was simple in itself, but the aftermath was filled with complications. There came a period I was so sick, there was a question if I would survive. Each time I was medically cleared to go back to work, there was always the question of how long would it be before I was back into the hospital. The period of October 2013 – January 2014 saw me endure somewhere between five (5) to fifteen (15) medical procedures just to get me to a point where I did not have to lean heavily on my wife just to walk across the room without being completely winded. I am unsure of exactly HOW MANY procedures I had because many of them were back to back as they tried to stop this infection, or this leak...I just know there were a lot. To discover I had gotten my “swag” back, meant she saw me as having made a noticeable stride towards being my old self before the surgeries. I took that as a compliment, but was immediately reminded if I had gotten my “swag” back, or style, then I needed to pay homage to the source responsible for bringing it back...God almighty. You see, I did think I was going to die a few times, but each time the devil tried to convince me to give up and give in I remembered, God was not through with me yet and it was not my time. I knew I was SAVED WITH AMAZING GRACE, not to just die in the hospital, quickly forgotten, but to do Kingdom building work for the Lord. God had just called me to pastor a church, and I had not even begun to scratch the surface of the work He laid out for me to do. I got my swag, but not a style, form of fashion, but S.W.A.G that I needed to exhibit...the fact that I was and am SAVED WITH AMAZING GRACE. Perhaps, Ms. Ruth was not just talking about my style, but my showing that even when man says no, God can still say yes. When man says something is impossible, God still can make things possible.

As Christians, we must take every opportunity, every advantage, every chance to show how great GOD IS and how HE implemented the plan for us to be SAVED WITH AMAZING GRACE!

The Exhibition of S.W.A.G. (cont...)

Key Thought: In times when most people would be devastated, the Christian has blessed assurance that no matter what happens, God will take care of us. God’s love for us is demonstrated every time we exhibit our S.W.A.G., SAVED WITH AMAZING GRACE!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THE WALKING DEAD

Scripture: Revelation 3:1-6: *3 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. ⁴ Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. ⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. ⁶ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

As we look at this passage of scripture, we see a problem that is still prevalent in the churches around the world today. There are churches who wholeheartedly believe they are serving God, in spirit and in truth, but the question is what God are they serving? Maybe they are trying to serve the one TRUE God, but are totally unaware how empty their praise and worship is. This issue is not only dangerous to the universal church, but also to the individual Christian.

The church at Sardis had a reputation for appearing to be alive and a functioning body of Christ, but was actually more dead than alive. They are told to save what they can, get help for the parts that are still healthy, because regardless what they may believe, they are not in perfect health.

This phenomenon has always interested me as to how spiritual zombies are created, or the spiritual walking dead. I have discovered there are numerous factors that contribute to this condition, but the ones I have

encountered the most are; people are taught wrong, taught right but went wrong, or went wrong and do not know how to get right.

People are taught wrong, often by well-meaning people that have read the Bible, but did not get a full Holy Spirit provided understanding of what they read. Therefore they put their spin on what God said, instead of what he actually said. Sometimes a person is taught right, but life happens, and before they know it, they have gone wrong and are too embarrassed to admit the error of their ways. There are times when the person knows not only have they gone wrong, but they just don't know what to do to get right. If any of this spiritual diagnosis occurs, the cure is simple...JESUS THE CHRIST! He works on our behalf and all we have to do is call on his name to go from being the spiritual walking dead to being alive and function in Christ. Once we call on his name, we must remember to give him complete ACCESS and CONTROL of our life so he can jumpstart our heart and revive us again!

Key Thought: When Church folk start doing their idea of God's work, instead of ensuring they are doing the true work of God, they are moving toward a spiritual deathbed and early grave, just like playing Russian roulette; sooner or later someone dies.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

THE WALLS CAN COME TUMBLING DOWN

Scripture: Joshua 6:1-5; 14-20: 6 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.² And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.³ And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.⁴ And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.⁵ And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.¹⁴ And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.¹⁵ And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.¹⁶ And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.¹⁷ And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.¹⁸ And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.¹⁹ But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.²⁰ So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

The battle of Jericho is one of the most famous battles in the early times of the Israelites. Many see the battle as an epic adventure of God's people against those occupying the promised land. The story goes much deeper than that! If we examine these scriptures closely, we see a siege was waged, and the walls of a fortified city fell to the ground by the Israelites being obedient to what God told them to do. Historians have surmised that the constant marching of the Israelites around the city, and the final march with the loud noise created a seismic disturbance similar to the effects of an earthquake. I don't know how accurate this scientific explanation is, but what I do know is the Israelites were obedient and the walls...walls that kept them from God's promise came tumbling down. This is important because many times there are walls in our lives that are keeping us from the promises of God. When we turn to the Lord's power, we see walls, strongholds, situations that have stood the test of time CRUMBLE to the ground when we are obedient to his will and his way.

Key Thought: God's ways does not have to make sense or line up with our way, because his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. All we have to do is line up with God's ways, and he will have his

way...knowing that one thing that will always make sense is this; God is always in control and his will, will be done.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THREE LITTLE CHRISTIANS

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-27 (KJV): ²⁴ *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:* ²⁵ *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.* ²⁶ *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:* ²⁷ *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

The story of the “Three Little Pigs” is always a childhood favorite. We marvel at how quickly the house of straw is constructed, and become dismayed when it is easily destroyed by the big, bad wolf. We wait with anticipation, hoping the house of wood will fare better than the one of straw, only to see it also fall. We then put our last hope on the house of brick. We cheer when the three little pigs remains safe against the huffing and puffing of the big bad wolf. We worry when the wolf tries to come down the chimney, only to jump with joy when the three little pigs triumph over the wolf. We then look on the whole episode in retrospect and wonder...why did those first two pigs build a house out of wood and straw anyway?

I have often pondered that question as a child, and as I got older began to see a parallel in the lives of church folk I came to know. I would see them build their spiritual house out of straw and figured everything was “All Good” in their relationship with God. After all, they attended all the right church functions, had the right Bibles, and even knew how to say the right “Christian” things at the right time. They looked safe and secure from the fiery darts of the devil only to discover with the storms of life came, their spiritual house collapse like one of the grass huts on the old television show Gilligan’s island. Looking like you have a good relationship with God is a lot easier than working on having a good relationship with God. I have heard it said many times...only in the dictionary does success come before work!

A spiritual house made of “wood” can withstand a little more pressure and is a little harder to build. This spiritual house takes a little more commitment than building one of spiritual straw. Scriptures are memorized and judiciously applied as the person sees fit. They know the Bible and feel justified in not doing certain things, while feeling totally comfortable doing things that most Christians would frown upon. These “wood” builder are quick to remind everyone, as a way of justification, the liberty they have in Christ (Galatians 5:1), however, they forget about the idea of this liberty is designed to keep them from becoming entangled again into the bondage of sin. This house may even stand the test of time as long as the wood doesn’t become warped in the weather or spiritual “termites” does not begin to rot and destroy the wood.

Those that build their spiritual house of brick and stone will still have to weather the storm. They will still have to experience settling foundations as time goes by, but a settled foundation can actually make the house stronger. A house built on the right foundation, in this case, JESUS CHRIST, cannot be destroyed by parasites, fire, bad weather, or the pressures of life, unless it is destroyed from within. A house built upon the rock of ages can withstand anything that comes its way. A house built upon the foundation of Christ, mortared together with the word of God, fellowship with the people of God, and constant

Three Little Christians (cont...)

...communication for guidance, understanding, direction in our relationship and service with and to God, cannot be huffed, puffed or blown down by the adversary!

Key Thought: On Christ the solid rock you stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

THREE Ps FOR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

Scripture: Psalms, 34:1-10: *34 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. ³ O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. ⁴ I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵ They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. ⁶ This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷ The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. ⁹ O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. ¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.*

This Psalm touches on how King David acted crazy to escape the wrath of the Philistines as recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-15. The Psalmist speaks to the goodness of God and how God saved him from certain doom. This Psalm also shows us how praying, pressing and praising in a situation can give us the God-given progress we need to continue with our assigned Kingdom Building Work.

We pray for two general reasons; we want things to change or we want things to stay the same. We may be in an uncomfortable situation; debt, marriage trouble, job stress, etc., whatever the reason, we pray for change. We may pray for things to stay the same, because it seems things are finally going our way. We are out of debt, our marriage is great and there is peace on our job. The reason we pray is not as important as the attitude we have in prayer and who we pray too. We must follow the example of Christ in the Lord's prayer...not words to be repeated but the attitude of reverence, respect, and the willingness for reconciliation with others. We pray to the one true God...the creator, the sustainer of life, the God that actually is everywhere, knows all and can do all...the GREAT I AM!

Prayer will only get us so far in a situation. I have learned that God has a workfare program, not welfare. We can't just sit back and wait for God to "wake us up" when he has made a way out of no way. We have to "Press" on and through our situation, while we are looking for the God we have acknowledged in prayer to direct our path.

We pray and press, but the devil will try and steal our joy. The devil will try to convince us that although weeping endures for a night, and joy comes in the morning...sooner or later it will be dark again, and he will have his way. I have found if you really want to convince the devil you are serious about your relationship with God, starting praising him in the midst of your trials. Praise him for what He has already done, is doing and will do. We must not just praise the Lord when things are good. We must not just try to praise the Lord when things are bad. We must bless and praise the Lord at all times, where the PRAISES OF GOD are like an anthem of praise and are CONTINUALLY IN OUR MOUTH!

Key Thought: Imagine what the world would be like if we stop complaining about what God should have done in a given situation, and begin to praise him for what he has done? If we decided to bless the Lord at all times, and let praises continually be in our mouth, we will don't have time to worry about tomorrow because we are too busy praising God today!

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

WALK YOUR TALK!

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3 (KJV): *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

The Apostle Paul is considered the author of the book of Ephesians. Ephesus was a very busy place, and as a result, it was hard for the church there to maintain their Christian perspective on things. Paul writes words of strength and encouragement (some would say admonishment) that still resonate with the universal church today.

Paul uses his captivity not as a badge of shame, but one of honor. Christ is a gentleman and would NEVER keep anyone against their will. Paul is indebted to Christ and because of the task that is at hand, he has to endure whatever the world throws at him to stay true to the task he undertook; the bold presenter and ambassador of Christ. Paul uses the word beseech, which could easily be replaced with the word “BEG” to show how important it is to the Christian faith to walk worthy in whatever tasking, assignment, duty, calling, ministry a person may be involved in. A look at the second chapter of the book of Revelation shows the church at Ephesus became so involved in the “doing” that forgot who they were “doing” things for, or forgot their first love.

It is so easy to get caught up in titles, positions, power and prestige that we forget to some, we are the only Bible they will ever read. We must never get the spiritual “Big Head”, because if we are not careful, we will begin to think we are more important than the Christ we preach, teach, share and represent. Churches today have Pastors and Deacons fighting for power in the church; members using the church’s money as if it is their own personal checkbook and the list could go on and on. These things happen in secular society all the time. There have even been shows made about the ruthlessness of big business like “Dallas”, and the “Have/Have Not’s”, so why would someone come to church to experience the same thing with supposed “SAVED AND SANCTIFIED CHURCH FOLK” as they have been trying to survive against at the regular job.

As Christians we are called to be different. We are called to be part of a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. . We don’t fight from a position to secure or maintain victory, we fight from a stance of Christ has and will

always keep the victory. Our fight is for those trying to decide, or struggling to show them how God shows up and shows out for his children. Our ancestors had a saying...Always put your best foot forward. We must ensure as a child of God, a representative of Christ that whatever we do, give the Lord our best, because he gave his...remember the cross?

Walk Your Talk (cont...)

Key Thought: It is easy to say “I am a Christian” but can people look at our Christian walk and see we are a Christian? We don’t have to be perfect, but it should be obvious we are following Christ, modeling and emulating him until such day we are glorified, because we spent our life not only talking the talk, but walking the walk so Christ is ALWAYS EDIFIED.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

WHAT WOULD JESUS HAVE ME DO?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (KJV): ²³ *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*

The book of 1st Corinthians is the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of Corinth, one of several, to help negate, combat and nullify some of the "bad" influences that had eased into the church. This scripture tells us that just because a person can legally do something, spiritually do something and still maintain their Christian composure while doing something, doesn't mean they should.

Many Christians use an abuse Galatians 5:1 that tells us we have liberty through Christ. This liberty gives us the freedom to not be held back by sin, to worship God in spirit and in truth, not just do what we want because we can. A good example would be the idea of having a glass of wine or twelve on a regular basis. Yes twelve. That may be fine for you. Perhaps the doctor prescribed wine as something your body needs. Maybe like with Timothy, your stomach is upset and you need it to settle it. This doesn't give you the right to pull out the old brown paper bag at church, take a swig and shout AMEN! An inexperienced Christian, or someone that does not know you would become confused at best, or at worst feel if they don't get a swig themselves, they are not truly a Christian.

A few years ago, there was a catchy saying in the Christian world "What would Jesus do"? Many believers lived by the principle, but unfortunately discovered what Jesus would do is not always possible for the average person to do. After all, he did his time as a human, gave us a bunch of examples, but we have a constant battle with "denying ourselves", which makes it a little harder to do what Jesus would do. Someone cuts you off in traffic? Jesus probably wouldn't call them a "Bagel Head" or "Banana Ear", but we might. I have found it a little easier to ask, "Okay Lord, what would you have me do, instead of what would you do"?

God gives us the freedom of choice to do many things. Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should. I could walk around the house in my Batman underoos, since it is my house (I don't have Batman underoos, I prefer Superman), but that probably wouldn't be a good idea if I know my wife is hosting a Mary Kay party. I could do it, but if I want to stay off my wife's radar, I shouldn't do it.

As a litmus test, when trying to decide what is appropriate as a Christian, why not use Christ as the example, since he is the standard. I have found when I ask what would Jesus do, it doesn't really help me much as I am not Jesus. He walked on water, healed the sick, and raised the dead. I have found when I ask, what would Jesus have me do or want me to do, it makes it a little easier to do the right thing. After all, like a child trying to please their parents to hear "GOOD JOB", don't we want to hear "WELL DONE MY GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT", when we are standing before our Heavenly Father?

Key Thought: We must never forget the light of Jesus is to shine through us in all we do. We may sometimes "dim" the light by our actions, but just because we can do something doesn't mean we should. We could easily become a stumbling block for someone trying to find their way to Christ.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES:

YOU RE NOT THE BOSS OF ME!

Scripture: Romans 7:14-25 (KJV): ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. ¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. ¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ²¹ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the

body of this death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

The book of Romans is considered to some of the most awesome work by the Apostle Paul dealing with Christian living. The Apostle Paul deals with many issues, that would trouble a Christian, but the answers can be easily found in the letter to the church at Rome.

The key passages, Romans 7:14-25, deals with an issue that troubles many Christians; if I am truly saved and sanctified, while do I still battle with evil thoughts, want to do evil deeds, or say and do things that may not be evil, but I know would not make God happy. Paul, as much as he exhibited Christ...as much as he labored and presented Christ still had issues with sin. He talks about the idea that he knows what he is supposed to do, but he ends up doing the opposite. Sound familiar? Paul realized there is a battle being waged within him; a battle between good and evil. He purposed with his mind he will serve the law of God, even though his flesh may have other ideas.

A few years ago there was a popular saying that was all over the television “You’re not the boss of me.” I don’t know where it originated, but the idea was reminding certain people that they did not have control over a person, could not dictate their every move and simply put they were not their boss. I have learned in order for someone to be your boss and have authority over you, you have to accept that authority for them to really tell you what to do. Why you accept that authority is not the issue. It could be for a multitude of reasons; continued employment to pay the bills, the person actually knows what they are doing, you have respect for them and the list could go on and on, but ultimately you accept and allow them the authority over you.

Sin wishes to have authority over us, and quite often we give in to the authority of sin because we feel we have no choice, but we do. When we accept the authority of the most high God, sin no longer can dictate our every move. Sin may be able to slip in some body shots from time to time, but ultimately, when we go into the service of the Lord, we must never forget...**SIN DIDN’T HIRE ME, SIN CAN’T FIRE ME, AND THEREFORE SIN WILL NOT, CANNOT AND SHALL NOT BE THE BOSS OF ME!**

Key Thought: Sin can only run amok within us if we let it. There are times we may fall down, but with the love and grace of God, we can get back up. We just have to remember who we serve, why we serve and how he can supply ALL our needs, not some, but ALL according to HIS riches in heaven.

What did you see as the main idea(s)?

How would you explain and apply this message to daily life?

What did God say to you through this message?

NOTES: