



Fields of Gold

By Pietra De bod

FIELDS

OF

GOLD

BY PIETRA DE BOD

DEDICATION

To my heavenly Father in whose Son is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and understanding.

I have sought Thee and have been found by Thee

“I AM MY BELOVED’S, AND HE IS MINE”

Special thanks to my great friends, Chantel Stouffs and Simone De Wet. You have committed yourselves to proofreading this book and have done so much more than what I have asked. We were in this together and you have a great part in this work and therefore a great reward. I am so blessed to have such close friends that love the Lord so extravagantly. You’re my Champions!!

Thank you for being you! I love you dearly.

COMMENTARY

As ripened wheat bows their bodies before a harvest due to the weight of the substance therein, the title Fields of Gold personifies the seamlessly knitted words shared from the contrite, humbled heart that penned this book. The revelations of truth that the Author shares, which stemmed from an experiential walk with the Father, will open doors in your heart that you fight to keep shut. Allow the Holy Spirit to enter these opened doors to bring forth the weighty substance of Gold within your wheat stem. Central to the foundation of this book, is the truth of the Gospel. No far-left sugar coatings, nor ear tickles, and also no far right self-righteousness works based rhetoric. Expect to read the simple truth, the Holy Spirit will lead. Amen.

Simoné De Wet

Fields of Gold written by a God fearing woman inspired completely by the Holy Spirit, will take you on an incredible journey to understand what it means to spiritually "die to this world". We know that the Harvest is ready but the laborers are few. This book touches the core of your innermost being as the Author captures you with her true knowledge and understanding of the Living Word of God. Through her own life experiences she speaks with truth and wisdom, stemming from her reverential fear of God. Be warned this book captivates you and once you start you don't want to stop. Thank you Holy Spirit for guiding your daughter to complete the task you gave her. All the Glory to You our Father Jesus Christ. - Chantel Stouffs

PART 1

DISCERNMENT

Among the gifts of the Spirit, scarcely is one of greater practical usefulness than the gift of discernment. This gift should be highly valued and firmly sought as being almost indispensable in these critical times. This gift will enable us to distinguish the chaff from the wheat and to divide the manifestations of the flesh from the operations of the Spirit -

A W Tozer.

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FORWARD

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” - Revelation 19: 7 (KJV)

God has prepared His Bride and she too has made herself ready. Not only has she sought Him and has been found by Him, but in their unity He has conformed her to be the extension of Him, His Body. What He desires, has become her desire.

The most ardent desire of her soul is to please Him. And she knows exactly what pleases Him most. Souls. For them He laid His life down willingly in obedience to His Father. For them He left His heavenly abode in glory to become a man of flesh and bone, so that as the Lord of the Harvest, He may come with sheaves of joy. I live in the midst of wheat farms. The most beautiful time is when the harvest is ripe. It truly looks like FIELDS OF GOLD against the endless baby blue sky. Speaking to my heart when I see the bales of wheat stacked up after harvest. The smell of the wheat in summer time fills my senses with the joy of harvest in town. Everybody knows it is harvest time! The fields are gold, not only in being ready for harvest, but the character that has been formed by those who will walk in the midst of the wheat with the sickle of the Gospel and God's authority, bringing in the sheaves. The Bride yearns to bring in souls to lay before Him the desire of His heart. His promise to her is indeed that He will give her the desire of her heart...fields of gold.

Introduction

God promises new beginnings. "Look I make all things new," He says. He does not choose favourites and promises that no one will be left out. He loves you too much to leave you just the way you are.

This means out with the old and in with the new. There is a very dear price to pay for this new beginning. He does not force it on any of us, it is completely voluntary. It will not be easy. It will cost you everything. At the heart of it, you lay down your life to take His life up in you. He will be gentle, He will be harsh, and He will rebuke. Building you up and breaking you down. He will cause you to feel utterly abandoned but also extremely loved. If you keep going, keep trusting in Him and keep loving Him more than anything else, He will bring you to that place, where He lives through you. Oh, the joy of that sweet reunion between spirit and Spirit! The way He always intended it to be. Yes, when you give your life to Him it encompasses your whole being. But it is your soul where your emotions, intellect and will resides, that He intends to "deal" with. All of your soul will be brought to a place of complete surrender. Nothing of the old will remain. Through this entire process, the spirit man in you will be strengthened and will grow, until Christ is fully formed in you. Your greatest battle will be to let go, to trust and surrender to the utmost. There is no other way to attempt the Christian life. The one life has to be laid down, in order for you to take up the other - that of life in the Spirit.

This book will not be an easy book to read. My intention is to speak the truth, which always exposes the lie. The greatest mistake you can make is to read through this quickly and put it back on the shelf again. If you are in a place where you just cannot go on living a Christian life that goes up and down, then this book is for you. It is meant for those who want to stop pretending that they are the real thing when in fact they are not.

Looking back, I wish there was someone that could have guided me through all the lonely struggles I had to endure. Someone that could have taught me that which took me years to understand. My journey was extremely lonely. My prayer is that this book will bring forth the wisdom and understanding that I have been taught, and that it will be a guide in the journey to greater holiness in Him. I pray it will be a sweet companion, one who speaks the truth, even if it hurts. We need the truth, because it is only truth that sets us free.

In Him is a place of sweet communion for those who are willing to take up their cross and die to self. It is a place of overwhelming love and rest. This is not a place you come to merely visit. This is the place where you abide in Him and have your being. Your existence is in Him.

I pray you find that place, for He has rent the veil, and the invitation stands. I pray the same prayer that Jeremiah prayed, "Lord, give them a heart to know you." (Jeremiah 24: 7).

1.

The Issue Of Discernment Is The Issue Of Truth.

The purpose of discernment is to identify the truth and expose deception. In Matthew 24 Jesus lists what the signs of His coming will be. Of that list, He mentions deception first out of all the signs, and four times in just that one chapter. This should awaken our understanding that if He mentioned it four times, there is a very real possibility that we can be deceived. We must take heed to His warning. If the Word of God talks about a great falling away and that even the elect would be deceived, then we should value discernment and have it in its proper place.

I have come to the realization that the enemy is keenly aware of our desires, especially our spiritual desires. Coming as the angel of light, he knows exactly that which our hearts covet and presents a table before us, decked with the most tantalizing delicacies. Whatever we desire, be it recognition, applause, love, to be holy or just to be used by God, he will use it to bring in deception. The enemy will deck the table with deception that will speak to our desires, whether good or evil. Very often a spiritual lust manifests itself in the form of conference after conference, or book after book. Constantly learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Like a master chef, he knows exactly how to sugarcoat our desires in spiritual candy, so that we would find ourselves licking our lips, but never come to the knowledge of the truth. Thinking all along that we are doing God's will. This spiritual lust can be likened unto physical lust that can never be satisfied. You will find these people always at the next best conference or spiritual gathering, but they never seem to grow in maturity. It is all just head knowledge. We become like those malnourished babies with the swollen tummies. We remain the same year after year, conference after conference and book after book. We have a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. Quoting all the right scriptures, but we have no spiritual fruit and no spiritual power. Knowledge of the Word does not constitute discernment. The Pharisees and Sadducees had a great knowledge of the Word, and yet the Truth was standing right in front of them.

Art Katz says, "The only thing that will keep us from deception to which He will abandon us, is the love of the truth. It is not enough to respect it, but to love it. Discernment and truth are synonymous. We do not love God any more than we love the truth, for He is the truth. So the love of the truth in itself, requires more than the respect of truth. The love of the truth will save us from the end time's deception and enable us to save others too."

I have to agree with this statement. Respecting truth might not compel us to adhere to its requirements, because it does not necessarily negate that that person would defend the truth or necessarily a desire to do what is required. But could very well just be head knowledge or just agreeing with it. But loving the truth speaks of a relationship with the truth where one would desire to protect it and adhere to it. Loving something or someone speaks of commitment and a mutual perception and conviction. Respecting truth, though admirable, will never be enough. We have to love it. In our day and age of technology, there is no shortage of truth, but the real issue is what we are doing with that truth and is this truth changing us? Is the truth not supposed to set us free? How sad is the age we live in where knowing the truth is no longer setting people free! Why is this? Could it be that our hearts have grown indifferent and callous as to not be able to be moved anymore? 2 Corinthians 4: 3 – 4 states, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the glorious light of the gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Their understanding is veiled.”

When we are silent to obvious deception, it takes ground in our hearts, leading us to become less sensitive the next time there is deception. Our hearts become calloused because we neglect to address the deception at its inception. Once we start the process of compromise it opens the door in our hearts for more, and it will also cause others to look upon our compromise as approving theirs. The result is that we will no longer accurately discern in those particular areas because we kept quiet the first time, until we are finally incapable of discerning at all. We dull our spiritual senses with each compromise, because we have been unfaithful with the little that we were given. Even that which we had will be taken away from us. The love of the truth requires a vigilance for the truth, daily, hourly and even moment by moment. “For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more in abundance, but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that he hath.” – Matthew 13:12.

Knowing Him who is the Truth

Pascal said, “For earthly things must be known before we can love them, but Divine things must be loved before we can get to know them.”

We have to jealously guard truth in our hearts, so that when our spirit is not moved by the Holy Spirit, we do not move. You do not participate, especially if you do not agree, for it will cause defilement and compromise. A sharpness and sensitivity of the spirit is required. We cultivate an intimate reservoir through our history with God in our innermost being. From this reservoir in the knowledge of who He is, we will guard the truth and also discern that which is false. The problem is that we have decided where the bar of God’s standard should be. However, His instructions are clear: Be ye holy, for I am holy. This is a very high standard. It has been tampered with. It has been minimalized to the point where when we sin, we call it “only human”. We look upon our pet sins as little irritants rather than the clear benchmark of our actual spirituality. In Song of Solomon, he says to the Shulamite the following:

Song of Solomon 2:14-15 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁴O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

¹⁵Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

He mentions foxes and little foxes. Both spoil the vines. We have to have an attitude and disposition of ruthlessness towards all foxes, big or small. These can be either obvious sins we are aware of like anger, bitterness, or indulgences etc., or those that we are unaware of like wrong understanding or discipline in certain areas. This intimate reservoir in the knowledge of God in the innermost being can only be found in the clefts of the rock. There where you are brutally honest in His presence with every single fox in your vine. Every little trigger of emotion, every little irritant that you normally easily dismiss as being human. You have to come to that place where you let go of your understanding of them, to the knowledge of how He sees these little foxes. Once you see it the way He does, you will know Him more and more. This is why He wants to

hear your voice. He wants you to come to Him with everything. Because everything has been influenced by this world and the way it operates.

Katz says, “For those moments with Him will be the index or measure by which you discern whether what you have before you is in keeping with that spirit. Keeping ourselves for the sake of others.”

For the knowledge of God as He is and wants to be known is the key to discernment that will protect us from deception. So we pray, “Lord, lift the veil of our understanding, give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.” (Ephesians 1:17b KJV) Revelation can be likened unto a bride that is unveiled. The bridegroom unveils the bride to see what she looks like, and she also no longer looks through the veil at him. There is no division. They both see clearly. Jesus said to Philip, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” Like Father, like Son. We become more and more like Him when we spend time with Him. We start to hate the things He hates, and rejoice in that which makes Him rejoice. Just like Moses’ face shone when he came down from the mountain, so shall we with unveiled faces behold Him in that place. We see Him as He really is.

I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts of God.” – A W Tozer

In John 10, we find a description of Jesus as the good Shepherd. In this chapter there is the constant reference to the recognizing of the voice or the tone of the true shepherd who guides and protects his sheep. The whole foundation is that of an intimate knowledge between the shepherd and his sheep. Not only does He know them intimately, but they know Him intimately. They know the sound of his voice, even the peculiar tone of his voice that is true to His nature. There is a certain nuance that is true to the essence of the Holy Spirit that is felt and experienced in those intimate times with the Lord. Herein we find how discernment is not just a question of doctrine, for even Satan knows the Bible better than most Christians. It is rather having a relationship so intimate with the shepherd that the slightest nuance of a lie is detected, not because you know the lie, but because you know the TRUTH. If any other shepherd had to call the sheep in the exact same manner, the sheep would not follow him, because they would not recognise his tone. A situation can be of such that everything sounds doctrinally right, but those who are in tune with the Spirit will sense that something is amiss. To love the truth is to love Him. It is birthed from that particular intimacy that you have with the Lord.

In A.W. Tozer's book, 'The knowledge of the Holy', he says, "A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well." We think we know God, but we do not know Him as we ought to, nor as He desires to be known. He said, "My people perish for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4: 6 KJV). Yet, if there is one thing we do not lack, it is knowledge. We do however lack in the knowledge of God. This is the reason why we perish, living lives devoid of true life that is resurrection life. It is also the reason why so many do not fear Him. For if we did, our lives would testify to this truth. Our words are how we express ourselves, through their tone, their meaning and motives. Everything about them expresses who we are and they express what we think of God. "Out of the abundance of the heart we speak." (Matthew 12: 34) Our love of the truth reveals our love for God. He asks us to seek His face, not only because He desires intimacy with us, but that we may truly know Him, and know ourselves too. In knowing Him, we know ourselves. To what degree we are still ignorant of ourselves, is in fact revealing the degree we still do not know Him, who is the Truth.

Praying for eyes to see and ears to hear is more than just a prayer. It is no magic formula, rather our consent to Him to do whatever it takes to make us see and hear as He does. The Word states in Matthew 5: 8 that the pure in heart will see God. For our seeing to be His seeing, our hearing to be His hearing, and our speaking to be His speaking, requires that our hearts be purified. The moment we set out to seek God with all our heart is the moment we are confronted with who we really are. We see life through our filters, be that tradition, religion, upbringing, status or race. We also hear Him through whatever issues we have not yet dealt with. The veil in the Most Holy Place was torn during Jesus' crucifixion. This veil was hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, where only the High Priest was allowed to go in. It was symbolic of the removal of the flesh, which is our sin that separates us from God's holy presence. However, the veil of His flesh was torn, and not the veil of our flesh. We may enter by faith, but we have to consider that without holiness no one will see the Lord according to Hebrews 12: 14. Our experiences with God are limited to the degree that we have dealt with the veil that separates us from Him, which is our sin. This does not mean He doesn't love us, but we have to remember that even though we are covered by His blood, which gives us favour and grace with Him, it does not give us free access to everywhere we desire to go. The moment holiness becomes your goal, is the moment you start to partner with the Spirit who will lead you into the truth of yourself and God. No longer are you playing church. You are actively pursuing God, but you will not find Him that easily. This search, as wonderful as it is, is through valleys and over hills, through glorious rivers of refreshment, and also through painful dungeons. Through the entire journey, the One whom you seek will be with

you all along. Only you might not see Him clearly yet. Then as the journey progresses, your eyes will be opened, the veil will be lifted and He will give you the strength and wisdom to endure all on this journey. You will be yoked with Him to no longer seek your own kingdom, but His. It will not be your will, but His. You will realize that you have to get rid of baggage, not only past baggage, but present baggage. They are that which weighs you down, the foxes. What a glorious discovery of Him, ever present and ever loving! Even in His judgments there is an overflow of His mercy. Painful at first, but glorious all together! This is how you know Him. This is how you seek Him. Because you allow Him to strip you and with each stripping, you start to see clearer, and in seeing clearer, you start to know Him more. Each stripping is an unveiling. I always say to the Lord, "I love the way You love me." What I mean by this is that I love everything about His love, the comfort and joy, the discipline and suffering. What an amazing wonderful journey it is to seek the Lord!

The true condition of your heart will affect your speaking. So the question is, what kind of speaking will it be? Will your speaking be a revelation of God? Our opinion is not of importance, but only that we reveal His heart in a given situation. The doctrine may be true, but if we miss His heart, we have missed the whole. Whatever residue of undealt issues still residing in your heart will defile the pure word He is asking you to speak. It will be a mixture of self and His Spirit. This will not necessarily mean that you did not hear from Him, but the message will be defiled. This will also determine whether your speaking will be an occasion or just a happenstance where no one will be confronted with the truth, just casual conversation. Your speaking will pierce the hearer's conscience, because you will be speaking as one who has been sent from God's presence who has a word of eternal value, because you have been with the Word. And He who is the Word has changed you. He has confronted you, stripped you and loved you right through it. You have a history with God. He is not just someone you read of in the Bible, but someone with whom you have a living relationship with. Do you desire that kind of relationship with Him? Anyone who says they have a relationship with God, but never changes nor grows, needs to re-evaluate their relationship. Something is amiss. God does not waste His words. God wants to be made manifest in our everyday ordinary accounts and will make Himself known to those who want to truly see and hear. Like Moses, we need to notice the burning bush. Nothing happens by accident. All things are significant and relevant to truth. Why, what and who is always the question. Be concerned for meaning. Be concerned for value. In my daily devotional written by Oswald Chamber, April 15, he says, "I am concerned with our desire to only want to see the Lord in the super spiritual, the high places and the fact that it does not matter much to you may mean that it

matters a great deal to God. Nothing should be considered a trivial matter by a child of God.” Nothing in our lives is insignificant to God. Our high spiritual moments are equipping us for the battles of the valleys. We cannot always live from out of the high transfiguration moments of life. We have to enter into the mundane and ordinary, and there put to work what we learned on the mountaintop. When we take note of the burning bush, there is no guarantee that we will return as we were before. It may very well be Pandora’s Box. What He requires of us may very well upset the whole apple cart with our friends and family, even our church that we love so much. It will not only change you. Moses was commanded to confront Pharaoh and it did not only change Pharaoh and Egypt, but also Moses was changed forever by his obedience to the Lord, as well as Israel. At that very moment when we are faced with that which He requires of us, we are confronted with our fears and insecurities. He knows how these very things are the root of why we do not know Him as we ought to. We think that these things have no effect on our relationship with Him, but it is usually the hidden issues that we have not yet dealt with that prevent us from knowing Him and being used by Him. There is a seeing and a being that is central to life that comes from this unveiling. This is true salvation! To be free from self! This seeing will always confront your reality. It reveals God the way He truly is, and this will devastate you because you will see yourself the way you truly are. When God shows us issues that we need to deal with and bring to Him, whether sin, pain or bad habits, if we do not deal with them, we may very well lose out on what He has in store. That which you choose not to see will be your own loss.

And the only thing that keeps our conscience sensitive to Him is the habit of being open to God on the inside.

Oswald Chambers –
My Utmost for His Highest.

God is always speaking. We must have the ear to hear, and the willingness to listen should we want to know Him and be used by Him. Knowing Him is crucial for discernment. In the first chapter of the Book of John, we find the Pharisees enquiring whether John the Baptist is the Messiah. They, knowing the scriptures, could not see the difference between John and Jesus. But Nathanael, a man without guile, which is to say a man without any hidden agendas, saw Him and said,

John 1:49 King James Version (KJV)

⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

Later we find Peter that says to Him, “Where can we go Lord, for only you have the words of life!”

In John 5, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees.

John 5:37-40 King James Version (KJV)

³⁷ And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

³⁸ And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent him ye believe not.

³⁹ Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Discernment is rooted in the knowledge of truth. But that truth cannot just be about scripture. It has to be from an intimate relationship with Him who is THE LIVING WORD. Many people hear from the Lord and in His great mercy He does speak to us. But unless we deal with the filters through which we hear Him, we will not only hear in part, but the Word we hear will be compromised or even defiled. We will believe we have done His will from a sincere heart, which may be true, but the Word will nonetheless have suffered because of our hearts. Rightfully the word states that we are to guard our hearts with all diligence, because out of it flows the issues of life. (Proverbs 4: 23 KJV)

3.

Every Word Counts

We should tremble not only at God's word, but at every word we speak, for we will be held accountable for every idle word. (Matthew 12: 36 KJV) Words all have meaning and we must be zealous for the integrity of words, the true meaning of a word, and not our own personal interpretation which suits our individual purposes. This is guile. We often hear certain words casually spoken by others and ourselves, but very few of us think of whether those words we use are lived out in integrity. The true meaning of the words. I am not just talking about lies or 'white' lies as we call them. I am talking about words that are used for exaggeration and for affect, but not in its true context. We cannot just admire the truth, we have to love it at all times. God will abandon us to a lie if we keep holding onto it. By doing this we forsake the truth over and over, and God is Truth. You have to love truth, because unless you love it, you will be a candidate for deception when tested, and the price is too costly. The requirement for discernment is not only to know the truth, but to be truthful in all your categories. How many insignificant vows are made daily to God even if done in sincerity? How often does our sincere yes or no turn out to be the opposite? Very much like New Year's resolutions we make promises, but they only last for a few days. Sadly, we think nothing of it. After all, everyone does it? We even believe that white lies are acceptable and no "biggie", but God abhors lies and clearly states that no liars will enter the Kingdom of God! (Revelation 21: 8 KJV) Think about it. We can either live from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, or we can live from our own words or the words of others. (Proverbs 13: 2 KJV) Can we truly say that our every word is our bond? Do we consider it serious when we do not keep our word as God does?

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. Proverbs 18: 21

Our speaking can be compared to our eating – unnecessary at times. We are not hungry, but we eat anyway. We do not need to speak, but we do. Why? Because to keep silent would be rude and heaven forbid, uncomfortable? We hate the empty spaces whether in our stomach or between each other. To be quiet and just be still in each other's presence is altogether a strange phenomenon. Jesus said, I have meat to eat that you know not of (John 4: 32 KJV) and He was talking about spiritual food, and He also said, the words that I speak are not my own, but My

Father's. (John 14: 10 KJV) He said that man shall not live from bread alone, but from every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4: 4 KJV). I am beginning to see that Jesus too makes a correlation between food and words. It stands to reason that the bulk of man's spiritual food is exactly that, what He says. But we feed our flesh three times a day and very often with no moderation. How many times a day do we feed on the Word, our spiritual food in a day? We cannot bear the thought of going without a meal. This is where fasting presents us with a cure, for it starves the flesh and feeds the spirit.

Jesus also said that it is not what goes in the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth that defiles. (Matthew 15: 11 KJV) If what I speak is not true in me, it defiles me. Every lie defiles, even if what I say is doctrinally true, but not true in me. If what I say is not true in me, it is a lie. This deception will harden my heart and eventually blind me to the truth of my own heart. Hypocrisy has a very costly price. Guarding our hearts with all diligence is of utmost importance because out of it flows the issues of life. (Proverbs 4: 23 - 27 KJV) The pure, living water of God will cleanse me, but whatever I have not dealt with will not only defile me, but others too. God is concerned not just with doctrinal truth, but authenticity and integrity. I may speak a truth, but it may not be true in me. This is guile. Please understand that I am talking about those who fail to walk the talk. Who has not been guilty of this? There is a spiritual reality behind this, and to think that the enemy has no part to play in it would be ignorant or wishful thinking. Deception is the name of their game. Our dependence upon God is vital, for who is sufficient for these things? If what we profess about ourselves is not true, deception gains greater ground within our hearts, and very soon we will find ourselves being given over to false doctrines or delusions, all because of bad habits and sin not dealt with, which is the lie within. We will slowly drift away and go into a spiritual slumber. We will either not care to discern whether something is of God or we will grow cold and indifferent to the Word and our relationship with Him. Where is deception conceived? It's conceived in the heart. Those very lies that we live, where what we do does not match up with what we say. Please do not think that this has to be big things, it's the little foxes that spoil the vine. The subtle degree of deception, unaware within ourselves, defiles and taints our discernment. Even in small things, where we are not privately who we publicly profess to be. This is why the issue of discernment is the issue of truth.

Proverbs 30:20 King James Version (KJV)

²⁰ Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Maybe, your eating is a reflection of your speaking. Speaking too much, too fast without reflecting on the integrity of your words. The one thing true of this generation is that everything has to happen fast. We have a microwave mentality. No waiting for the right words, no pondering or discretion. Eating happens in the same fashion. No thinking about what we are actually eating. No considering whether enough is enough. Our inability to pause and think about what we are about to say, speaks of our lack of self-control and desire to only be heard. Which is seen in our everyday occurrences where we lack self-control. This lack of self-control will not just be present in our speaking, but in all our doing. We are indeed at a loss of discernment to the point of poverty, even with regard to the natural, let alone in the spiritual. Eating too fast and too much is death to the body. Just like speaking too fast and too much is death not only to the hearer but the speaker. There is no spiritual filter or a guard in front of our mouths. Psalm 19:14 says, Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

For I have not
spoken of myself, but
the Father sent me,
He gave me a
commandment, what
I should say, and
what I should speak.

John 12: 49

is
No

I have often wondered about those that speak so much and so fast whether they feel their words may get lost and pursue them like a runaway train. Maybe something else is driving them? It has the tone of a restless spirit, of fretting and overexcitement. Proverbs 29:20 says, “See thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” We have to think about what we say, how we say it and when we say it. When I say it is a death, I mean that it is a death to discernment. Are we unwilling to wait on His timing and is the Holy Spirit to keep up with our pace? We need discernment in what we speak, but also how we speak. Our tongue has the power of life and death. With our speaking we not only give a message, but also the tone represents the One of whom we speak. It is a known fact that to eat while not hungry will eventually render the hormones obsolete, that is responsible for the feeling of satisfaction. Your senses become dulled and the message is no longer received, therefore you gorge yourself endlessly on food. This is true of speaking as well. The Holy Spirit will softly prompt us that we have said enough, or even not to speak at all. The discernment to pick up on the Spirit’s cues is dulled every time we refuse to listen. Eventually we silence Him all together. All this because of over-indulgence. How often have you visited a friend and felt afterwards that the whole conversation was just about you? Never did the Holy Spirit get a chance to touch the other person because you were too busy to talk about your own life, even if it was a testimony. You may say, surely testifying is giving honour to God? But one has to wonder whether the testimony was given in the flesh. That which is of the flesh is

temporary and earthly, but that which is of the Spirit is eternal life. When we speak it becomes the issue of truth as well. For our revelation does not qualify us to speak. It is only as it becomes life in us and is true about us that our testimony will have power. Life or death lies not just in the words or the fact that it is doctrinally true, but that it is real and true in me.

He also gives us an enlargement of the heart to receive His truth, but not all are at the same place to receive. Jesus said in John 16: 12, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Many are simply not ready and suffer spiritual indigestion because of being forced fed. One would think that it is good to testify of God's goodness, but sometimes our good is not His perfect. Sometimes our timing is also not His timing. To hate that which is good is even to hate to share a revelation or truth outside of God's timing. How does God see it when we presume "we know" upon Him? Is it His will or my will that is being done? This "good" is a deception that feeds our pride and gives us an audience, with little regard to God's glory and the consequences on the hearers. God is not glorified by this. Oswald Chamber says in His Utmost for His Highest, May 25, "Whenever our right becomes the guiding factor of our lives, it dulls our spiritual insight. The greatest enemy of the life of faith in God is not sin, but good choices which are not quite good enough. The good is always the enemy of the best."

There is no weight to what we say and nothing grips anyone anymore. People prefer their ears to be tickled and most present day prophets oblige. This causes a corrosion of the truth. Truth has fallen in the streets as Isaiah says in chapter 58. God is the God of Truth. He is the God of reality. He is reality. If we do not learn what to say, how to say it and when we should say it, we will lack the discernment necessary in situations when it is required the most. For our speaking cannot be our own. He desires to circumcise our tongues so that our speaking becomes His speaking. When this happens, it becomes an event that changes lives.

It is because of our inattentiveness and irreverent view we have of words that we dish it out to all, with no thought of the consequences. Not just in heated debates, but just in general. The power of life and death is in the tongue, and yet that mere thought has not truly sunk into our hearts. Life and death! With it comes such a huge responsibility to place a guard on our lips. But our endless words are an indication of the heart. And the heart is an indication of the mind. Whether we are in His rest, or whether our thoughts are running like a freight train. When listening to others, are you calculating a rebuttal without truly listening? Do you feel bereft when you do not get the opportunity to say what you wanted to? Do you have to comment or answer every question, just because you know the answer? Our impulsive nature to want to be quick with an answer, speaks

of our spiritual disposition of being unable to control ourselves in the area of our thoughts. It may be rooted in pride, but it also may be because we have not efficiently considered how God feels about words. We will be held accountable for every idle word we speak. (Matthew 12: 36 KJV) This should bring a holy fear into our hearts, and yet it does not. Why is this? Like runaway children we as over-indulgent parents allow our thoughts, therefore our words, to run amuck, only finding out later that our neighbours do not like our kids. If we do not value our own words and those of others, how will other people value our words? In essence it shows the true nature of how we value HIS WORD. Therefore, truth has fallen to the street. Discernment suffers in us for our lack of self-control and lack of appreciation and reverence for words.

4.

“Earthly Minded”

He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6: 17 KJV). We have the mind of Christ and we are to abide in Him and His Word. We are to mind the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5 KJV), for to mind the things of the Spirit and to set our affections on things above and not below, is to live by His Spirit. It is to be mindful of that which is eternal on a moment to moment basis. To walk circumspectly. To walk by the Spirit while still on earth, is to live from the place where Christ is seated. Like Abraham, the Promise Land was still a strange land to him and he was by faith looking forward to his heavenly dwelling. We are too earthly minded and not spiritually minded. It requires a certain diligence to keep our hearts moment by moment. This is not possible if we are not spiritually in tune with the voice of God. To walk by the Spirit is ultimate in its nature. According to the Strong's Concordance Proverbs 4: 23 speaks about keeping our hearts, in the same way a guard would watch over a prison, or a watchman on a wall to look out for the enemy. Why? Because out of the heart flows the issues of life. This is liken to a gate that allows things in or out. To loosen ourselves from this earth is the way of the Christian man. We can only walk in the spirit to the degree that we have let go of this world and our flesh. This world constitutes that which entertains our senses constantly. Things like traditions that keep us in bondage like Pagan Easter, Christmas and family and friends that expect and demand that we do things according to this world, to mention but a few. Even the new doctrines that we pick up like pesky lice on the internet. We are to leave all of this world, to be strangers to this world, but we are not. Our relevance in this world is our authentic spirituality not our natural dispositions as humans. Not by how much we can relate, but rather how much we do not. We are easily beguiled like Eve. There is always something through which the enemy draws us away from our true and pure devotion to the Lord. The Hebrew movement is but only one of these schemes of the enemy to do this. This is always in its embryonic stage for the love of the culture and to gain better understanding of the feasts and traditions of Israel. But not long, and the traditions become a law, the feasts and elements become a way to judge others as spiritually inferior because they lack in the knowledge of the intricate details. That which started as seeking God has been exchanged for works. The motive may have been pure but the focus has changed. By this I am not saying that we should not have any understanding in these things, but to lose our focus because of these things, will bring us into bondage again. It may start innocently enough, but there will be no life in it, only religion. We are called not to the shadow of things to come, but Jesus is the fulfilment of

these shadows. We are hidden in Him with God (Colossians 3: 3 KJV). The word says that there is a way that seems right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14: 12 KJV). Things like the focus on biblical essential oils and natural ways of dieting are all distractions. Colossians 2:16- 17 (KJV) says, Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. There is no problem if we wish to honor these things, but if we lose sight of the fact that it is only a type and shadow and it changes us that we are more Hebraic, so much so that we consider not observing them, a sin, then I have to question the place it holds in your heart. We should honor these things in humility, judging no one who does not do it, or those who do not uphold it, must not judge those who do. It remains only a type and shadow.

They may be good ideas, but are they truly essential, even if they are called "essential oils"? This is not to say that the Lord does not use us in the areas of health and healing or that He does not give us wisdom. However, we have to ask ourselves whether these things are essential and whether they serve as substitutes. In all things He must have pre-eminence. These are all just trappings that keep our eyes focussed on the things of this world and not on the Lord. And so our focus becomes that which is good, and we forfeit that which is perfect. We settled for good when we could have had the perfect. Our focus becomes these things instead of the Lord of these things. We misplace our trust eventually in these things and we justify ourselves by calling it good or godly. There is a saying that one must not be so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good. Is that really true? Does that "gel" with the word that states that we are to set our affections above and not below? Our affections, our loyalty cannot lie with this world. We are in this world, but not of this world. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall remain. If your main focus is your children and their future, or your work and the paying of the bond, or the next great deal, you have set your affections on this world. It is not that these things are not important, but rather these are still the things that binds us to this world. Unless we see these things from His perspective, they will overtake our priorities and it will be the troubles of this world that weigh far more than the Kingdom of God. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also (Matthew 6: 21 KJV). If you are more focused on the kingdom of this world, your heart will be there too. This does not mean that we should be ignorant or unwise, because as per Luke 16:11 we are to make provision for ourselves.

We are all too earthly minded. Whatever you struggle to give to Him, is that which still binds you to this earth. God is not going to pry your hands off of these things. No, He lovingly draws you by His Spirit in communion with Him. Jesus said, "Seek My Kingdom first, and all these other

things will be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33 KJV) We establish His Kingdom on earth not by being earthly, but by being spiritual. We are citizens of heaven already. We have to be guided by the Spirit and not by the dictates of this world in what is considered fashionable or tradition. We rule and reign on earth now, through Jesus Christ and by His grace in heavenly places.

The enemy has every intention of “as above, so below”, but it is his kingdom that he wants to establish here below. There will be a new heaven and a new earth – a New Jerusalem. We cannot sleep at the wheel and make nice with the world in hope to not offend. Looking and acting like the world, hoping we will go to heaven someday. Somehow the Church has no militancy, vision, or marching orders by which she lives. No purpose, resoluteness, no desperateness, just zombies mindlessly following the next trend or the next how to be a great parent or save your marriage seminar. Not that these things are not important, however, they seem to keep us distracted from spiritual reality. Exactly what the enemy wants, and if we know this, we do not care. We enjoy our sin way too much or relish what this life can give us. You know, having our best life now! We give way to that which is good and permissible. We cannot be so entangled in this world and think that this will not defile or shape our thinking, which in turn will affect our discernment. Our whole life from within and out has to be sanctified.

We have to understand that our way of thinking has been programmed from birth. Already there has been decided what school we will go to, who our friends will be, what we will become and what college we will go to. Everything planned and set out. Like little robots or fish that all swim in the same direction. But we are to swim upstream, not in rebellion, but we are to question why we do what we do and whether we even should participate. We grow up with the idea that we will get married and have children. The way we live speaks volumes to where our priorities lie. There are people that love to travel. But the source of the energy to even work to make the money in order to travel, comes from Him. He has decided long before we were even born what His intention for our life is. Do we even care? It is not that He does not wish us to enjoy life, it is that we often do not even consider Him in it. He is almost like that friend we have to invite with, because after all, without Him it will not be blessed. We use Him. We have to live in the reality that this earth is not our home. And yet, we still love the things of this world so intently. How we relate to this world and compromise in order to fit in, directly influences our discernment.

5.

The Real You

There is a correlation between truth and power as seen in Acts 5. Ananias and his wife paid with their lives for lying. However, because Peter was of the truth, his words were backed with power. They fell dead instantly. Considering the relationship between truth (authenticity) and power, I have to ask in what power some miracles are done today. Especially where we know there is deception? In this day and age, the church is greedy for this “power” and therefore open to these lies. Jesus said, “It is a wicked generation that seeks after signs.” (Matthew 16: 4 KJV) Today, signs and miracles constitute truth, but does it?

The Spirit of Truth must be in everything we do, say, and think. We must despise compromise, indifference, and the cutting of corners. We have to live in the Truth. It is not for us to examine whether truth is needed or relevant, we just have to do it. Truth is always relevant. Truth is a matter of life and death. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul spared Agag and the best of the animals. He destroyed only in part, in order to keep some for himself, even though he knew that he was to slay all. God made it clear that everything had to be destroyed. Partial obedience is disobedience. The same God who rented a kingdom from a disobedient king in the Old Testament, is the same God who killed Ananias and Sapphira when they lied in the New Testament. They submitted a thing in part to stand for the whole, just like king Saul. Our God does not hesitate to slay those who seek to deceive the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. God does not change! In Isaiah 11: 3 it says of the Jesus, “He shall be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears, but with righteousness shall He judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth”. This means that Jesus grew up in the fear of the Lord. He was just a man, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Because He feared God, He was able to die to self, daily, in order that He would be able to see, hear and judge as God does. Jesus said, when you judge, judge righteously. He said this right after saying that we are to remove the beam from our eyes, IN ORDER to see the mote in our brother’s. The one comes before the other. Just because you know the truth does not constitute you to be able to judge another. You can only judge on that which is authentically true in yourself, to be able to see with clarity what is in another. We all like to say that the word says we are indeed allowed to judge, but have we fulfilled the requirement for that kind of righteous judgement? It is not just a question whether we are ourselves guilty of the sin we so eagerly judge in others, but

also what are the undealt filters through which we look at others and judge. Our discernment is filtered through all those things we have not dealt with, which is not only sin, but our life's experiences, tradition etc. There is seeing and there is seeing. Earthly and temporal seeing or spiritual and eternal seeing. To see with His eyes requires a death to our own seeing. He grew in His sonship and after His obedience in baptism, the Dove descended upon Him and the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. Only after this, His ministry started in power! The Holy Spirit is pre-eminently the Spirit of Truth before He is the Spirit of power. A dove is also the symbol of purity and innocence. God is looking again for sons to which He can send His Spirit to rest on, sons on which the Spirit of Truth and power can rest. Every lie in us has to be uprooted. We must be ruthless with lies, because God abhors lies. We have to abhor lies and love the truth above all. Abhor half-truths, because they are in essence lies. If what you are about is not true, you need to deal with it. No matter how small. Hypocrisy is making the part stand for the whole.

Lying is the manipulation of truth to foster and hide ulterior motives. This is Jezebel. Jezebel is always about control and manipulation. Those who think that this spirit has a gender preference make a grave mistake. Unbeknown to the Church the Jezebel spirit has crept in. Worship has sadly become a subtle means to manipulate the atmosphere and desperately attempt to create the right mood, "the anointing" to draw God down. Why is it that we think God can be moved by music and by creating an atmosphere when He has been surrounded by glorious untold angels in worship in eternity? We do anything from dances, amping up amplifiers, to dramas. Unfortunately, often the motivation is more to keep the members loyal than to bring the presence of God down. But God cannot be brought down, and He is only moved by faith. Faith in Him and not the atmosphere we have created. This Jezebel spirit lusts for control. Do we really think we can bring God down? I am not saying He cannot be moved, but we have constituted what we think His presence to be, as the real thing, where in essence we have rather just created an atmosphere that stimulates our senses. He is only moved by faith. The offense that many believers show by their appearance of woundedness, silent treatment, over exaggeration, aggressive nature and self-pity is part of this spirit in the church and in our homes. It is false, deceptive and aims to control. There can only be One in control. Our means must be in accordance with His ends. Especially in worship.

John 4:23 - 24 (KJV) says," But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Please note that it says, the TRUE worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Worship is not true if it is not done in spirit and in truth.

Subtle manipulations are lies! Are we making ourselves to be more spiritual than what we really are? Are we making the part that people see in church standing for the whole? The message and the messenger have to be one! God hates these lies in His Bride and all these lies start very small and seem insignificant, but the enemy only needs a small opening to start building his strongholds in our minds, families and the Church. So, what constitutes the oxen and the sheep which we spared? Nothing of the flesh is good! He wants it all on the altar. Not to give it back, but to consume it. True worship is sacrifice! Whenever we want to know the right way to consider anything, we only have to go to the very

Truth is everything as God sees it. Jesse Penn Lewis

first time it was introduced. The very first time worship was mentioned in the Bible is where Abraham went up the mountain with Isaac. At a certain point he told his servant that he and the lad would go the rest of the way, and worship on the mountain. Do we think his words coincidental? Maybe Abraham was thinking of a nice way to persuade his servant not to go with them, so that he would not know what Abraham was up to? Not one word in the Bible is wasted. Worship is sacrifice. May we cleanse our hearts and remove the leaven in every area of our lives, even the deceptive appearances. Research has proven that it takes more energy to keep up with appearances or masks than to actually deal with our issues. It is draining to try and be someone who you are not, than to just be yourself. Many people today have lived a lie for so long that they cannot any longer discern between what is true and what is not. May we refuse that God leaves us just the way we are, because we are done play-acting church. The Lord requires truth in the innermost being. Stop lying to yourself. Ask Him to restore a right spirit within you (Psalm 51 KJV), even that He may fill you with the Spirit of Truth and without measure, no matter the cost.

The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Words have to be backed with truth of character to have power. The truth is in us, and we in it, only to the degree that we actually walk in it. Are you walking in all of the truth? The church is supposed to be a haven for the world because of her transparency, our willingness to confess our sins to one another and to bear those weaker than us in prayer. But how few of us are willing to, in weakness, confess our sins to one another, because of fear that it might get out, or that our character may be tainted? Maybe they will not like us or esteem us as high anymore. Or do we fear the rejection and think that what we say will be held against us? God does not want us to be reckless and inconsiderate to our audience in these confessions, but the Body cannot function as it should if the foot is in pain. God intended the Body

to operate in their different functions so that we will remain humble and considerate to each other's needs and minister to those needs. Gangrene sets in, and just like leprosy the senses die and it spreads through the Body if we do not confess and walk in the truth. Without that inner sense of the Holy Spirit to be truthful, we eventually go deeper into the mire of loneliness and keep struggling with the same problem year in and year out. Confession to church in fellowship with one another, in the right context where authenticity is relished, is like the cleansing of the soul when confessing one's sins unto the Lord. It fosters a bond of love that is true and the Spirit of God works in power, where there is truth! But dare we believe that? Is not the Body His body? How can the Body of Christ serve one another if we constantly hide from the truth? The church is seen as false and the greater consequence is that our testimonies are narrowed down to earthly financial blessings, whilst the rest of the church and the world is dying in sin for the want of truth that will set them free. The purpose of God suffers greatly because of our pride. All because we refuse to stand for the truth. Art Katz says that truth is not the flat dead glare of a police searchlight. It is not cold and lifeless. It is a spirit and a supreme mercy to all who welcome it and love it. However, truth is of no value unless it penetrates the heart and makes us truer. The enemy is well aware of every lie we are still bound to, and is not fooled by our bravado, but is only impressed by those whose character backs up their words. In Acts 19:13 – 16 the evil spirits confronted the vagabond Jews, exorcists who used Jesus' Name and they said, "Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you?" The evil spirits then attacked them. We have to ask, why then were these men attacked using the Name of Jesus? Even if these men had the discernment to know which spirits to address, they were ill fitted for the task because they lacked the character. It cost them dearly and will cost us dearly too. Discernment is not a gimmick, a "Noddy badge", or something we take out of our bag of tricks. Discernment is who we are. Discernment is truth.

In a world of deceit
telling the truth is a
revolutionary act.

George Orwell

the

6.

Conformity

The Cambridge Dictionary defines conformity as behaviour that follows the usual standards that are expected by a group or society. It is truly overwhelming the hour of deception we find ourselves in. I say the hour, for the hour is fast approaching for Him, who is the Truth, to judge every lie, which He abhors. As the Word states, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the God with whom we have to do. He is not a God of our own making that will see our lies as “boos”, rather He clearly states that no liar will enter into the Kingdom of God. It is a fearful thing for me just to write this, for I have the responsibility to be what I write. I myself have to be the message. Oh, that we would be like a dove, with no guile, but soft and pure with a single eye for only that which is true! But our society is engulfed in lies and deception. The Word clearly states that we are to renew our minds and give our bodies as living sacrifices. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is. (Romans 12: 1 - 2 KJV)

The deception is celebrated in politics, the internet and television. We are birthed into sin and indoctrinated until the Son of Man comes and sets us free. Hence the cry of the Spirit that we would come out of this world and to have our minds renewed and not to be conformed to it. It is more than just thinking better of our neighbour, it is more than just being “good”. It is not only about coming out of indoctrination contrary to the Word of God, but also coming out from one's own soul's control and to submit to the Holy Spirit's control. Many of us have been reborn into the Kingdom of God, but we still think and act like the world. This creates so much ambivalence and guilt and the enemy finds occasion through this compromise. Unless we are committed to the process of renewing our minds and allowing the Spirit of Truth to search our hearts and to show us if there is any wicked way in us (Psalm 139: 23 - 24 KJV), leading us to truly repent and change, we will remain in this ambivalence. This should strike fear into us, for He said, if you were but hot or cold, but now that you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth (Revelations 3:16 KJV). As a man thinketh, so is he (Proverbs 23: 6 KJV). We have successfully made all of the world grey. Everything has become relative in this world. Relative to what we see as truth. Absolutes are only applicable when you undermine the world's truths. There are no longer white or black,

but all are grey. Or should I say rainbow colours? How we look at truth itself has been marginalised to personal opinion and observation, by the colour of the “glasses” we wear. It is no longer about what truth is, but whose truth it is – Buddha’s, Krishna’s, Allah’s, Atheists or the LGBTQ community? It is all too relative and all too accommodating. We can choose which truth suits our lifestyle. We choose that which we are able to do and on the basis of our ability agree or change if necessary. After all, who are we to say that we have sole ownership of truth? Is not truth relative? For out of conformity comes perception and unless that conformity is challenged and placed next to the plum line of the Word of God, our perception will be blurred. Do you go with the flow of the stream? When the latest Christian book is praised by all, do you go out to buy it as well? When revival breaks out at a particular church, do you go with the crowd to get some for yourself too? Broad is the way that leads to destruction and narrow the way of life. The broad way is not necessarily unchristian, in fact the chance is very good that it will seem all too Christian. But we are called to follow the Shepherd not the sheep! Sitting on the fence trying desperately not to offend and to be politically or socially correct for the sake of peace. However, without truth there is no peace. No real peace, but only facades. There is only tolerance and an undercurrent of resentment and hostility. We sit for hours in front of Netflix or sports entertainment, and become indoctrinated to think like the world, whether we believe it or not, or whether we think we are susceptible to it or not. ‘Tell-A-vision’ is called programming for the purpose of programming the masses with the vision you are told. It spreads a veil over our understanding and because we are under this veil, we do not see as we ought to see, and are unaware of our enslavement. Even the advertisements are produced to incite a need or desire, done through careful research on the study of human psychology. The whole world is united under the banner of sport, with satanic rituals as entertainment in the openings of these grand events. We just think it to be for our entertainment, but it is not. It is a lie. Even the traditions of man like the worship of Ishtar on Easter or Christmas, and Halloween, known as satanic high days, to the indoctrination in schools and the workplace. Our Bible has been translated into more than sixty different versions, if not more! Is there any place on this earth where we are not bombarded with deception? Truth has been diluted and twisted in the process. So the things of this world, the very distinct sense or spirit of deception should be vile to us the closer we are to Him. Not the people, because we are called to love the lost and pray for them. But the things of this world are utterly profane, always with deceit, being the playground of the devil. We need to have a divine discomfort for anything less than that which comes from heaven. God’s nature starts to permeate your being and without consciously being aware of it, there is a growing discomfort whenever you have to do with an opposing spirit. You may at times not quite be able to put your finger on it, but there is an unease

within you. This too is discernment, but of another kind. This is Spirit against spirit. Because God's aim is to give us His divine nature. Think about that a bit. The more we are with Him in His presence and allowing His Spirit to cleanse us, the more virtue is poured forth in us. This virtue is not our own, but His. The absence of persecution in the Church in the western world makes it grievously clear that the world is not yet sufficiently offended by us. Everything within, which is truth, must confront that which is a lie. Even without a word from us, but just our presence should confront the evil forces. And not only confront but establish God's Kingdom right there where previously the enemy ruled with his lies. This is a battle fought in the spirit, but made manifest in the physical. It is a progressive claiming what is ours through Christ, which is the Promised Land. God gave us so many promises in His word. One of which is the land over the Jordan. Yes there are giants, but His promise to us is to be bold and courageous and that He will be with us. He will overcome the giants. We are now to walk by faith, but to walk by faith requires the absolving of any trust in the flesh. We have these great promises of God and He equips us for war. Discernment is essential in the understanding with what we are dealing with in a given situation. For every situation God will require us to discern and not take it upon ourselves that we know how this will play out just because we have done it before. Every moment has with it its own merit, and every "now" has eternal value. We are to walk in complete dependence upon Him. How you deal with it is not based on a formula, but rather discernment to know what is required, lest you fall in the snare of religion or formulas. But if we are not awake and alert, we can easily fall back into our own natural logic and humanistic ways instead of trusting in God.

The whole world is anti-Christ. Where can we go to find pure water? There is a fountain, which never dries up, that can quench our thirst so that we will never thirst again. He is the Living Word, He is the Living Fountain, saying to all who are thirsty for truth to come and drink of Him. Not just to quench our thirst, but to wash us with the water of His Word. Jesus said "Father, sanctify them, wash them with Thy Word, Thy Word is truth." (John 17 KJV) Not just His written Word, but His voice, His presence that cleanses, that living communion with Him. In His presence we personally meet the Truth, and the lie in us and around us are exposed and must flee. Light always overwhelms darkness. Why are we dying of thirst whilst sitting next to the Fountain of Life? Like the woman of Samaria (John 4 KJV), if we put our vessels down, our own efforts and the broken cisterns of this world that never satisfies, and drink of the pure water of God's Word, it will change and cleanse our hearts. Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4: 1 – 4, Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by

manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

What Paul is saying is that they have renounced the very things of this world that the god of this world used to blind their minds. They have broken their cisterns from which they have previously drunk. Their conscience is clear before man and God. One of the problems with this world is the desensitizing of our conscience. We see so many murders in this world just through television and computer games. The colosseums of Rome where Christians were ruthlessly murdered for entertainment has now entered into our very homes for our own personal entertainment at the press of a button. The graphics of games and that of television is so real, and have now come to the point where you have a greater part in it by not just observing but actually doing the killing yourself. Previously we would have been horrified to see someone be shot between the eyes or pierced or cut with a knife, but now it is so "ordinary day". Gone are the days where the villain is actually the bad guy. Now we root for the one bad guy over the other bad guy, as if this is quite normal. Our values and standards are systematically changed. One may easily say that it is not real or it is just a game, but what is happening to the DNA of your conscience by seeing something over and over? And in the process do you really think that this does not eventually affect your worldview and ultimately your discernment? Why do we think it is okay to watch American Idol, The Voice, or any celebrity competition, when the very names by which they are called testifies against us, not even mentioning their lifestyles. The enemy mocks and laughs at us. Why are the very things He died on the cross for our entertainment and our hearts are not convicted? We cannot drink from the cup of Belial and God. We cannot serve two masters. We will love the one and despise the other. We have to come to a dividing choice. The road is much narrower than we think. Please understand that this does not mean that we cannot watch a nice film. Whatever we do, we need to do it to the glory of God. Remember, whatever is not done in faith, is sin. My motto remains, if He cannot watch it with me, I cannot watch it at all. Also, the amount of time the enemy steals is frightening. Time that belongs to the Lord.

We are called to be a peculiar people and a royal priesthood. Not weird and unattractive. But different. Holy. People that He has set aside to be like the Levitical priests, carriers of the Ark. Of His glory. These vessels have to be prepared and He does not take this preparation lightly. Some Christians only want to make sure they will get to heaven. Others want to know Him. But there comes a time in our walk with Him, where we want to be used by Him. And if we are truly

serious about this, He will begin a work in you. Ephesians 2: 10 says that we are His workmanship in Christ Jesus unto good works which He has preordained that we should walk in them. This is only for those who take truth seriously. For those who love truth. Serious about the truth in themselves and about God. Because His Spirit cannot move as He desires, if we have hidden lies within. He has to deal with us, but we have to know that though He loves us, He will be ruthless with every lie. He hates lies. Circumcision cuts off. It requires a heart and mind that wants to be dealt with by God in order to be for Him what He needs for His glory.

We cannot still be so part of this whole world's system, whether in entertainment or monetary or socially, we are called to be set apart. If we are so intertwined, how will we be able to discern and speak the truth when it is required of us, when we ourselves live in deception? Our lifestyle has to match up with our testimony. Conviction brings with it a changed lifestyle. If it is not so, and you still look the same, talk the same, wear the same clothes and are still so conformed to this world that others still see you as "one of them", then you need to ask yourself whether you are not maybe standing with one foot on one side of the border, and the other on the opposite side. We are citizens of heaven, not of this world. We have to be willing to pay the price. Not to be weird. Our discernment is influenced by how much we still play the tune according to this world's song.

7.

Free of Guile

To be guileless is to be completely unaware of oneself, with pure motives, no hidden agendas, no exaggeration of one's significance or even the importance of their calling. It is a person authentic in himself, knowing the authentic when he sees it. Being the very thing in himself. Nathaniel was such a man proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus' first statement to his disciples was, "Surely here is an Israelite without guile." (John 1: 47 KJV) The pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 5: 8 KJV). To be free of deceit is to be free of wanting to cut the corners, of playing angles or to be known as spiritual in certain areas or anything like that, especially if it is not true. Are you silent when something is said about you out of proportion and glorifying you, gaining appreciation and adoration? How many of us will out of truth correct someone for praising us or how many will be able to just say thank you instead of declining a compliment out of false humility. There is a fine line when it comes to authenticity. We are to be jealous of the truth...in all things.

Seeing is an issue of the heart, which is the issue of discernment. God desires to show us many things. He says to Jeremiah, "Call unto Me and I will show you great and mighty things." (Jeremiah 33: 3 KJV) He wants to show us, but He has to be able to trust us with it. The purity of our hearts determine not only our ability to be able to see as He sees, but it will determine whether He can trust us with it. Because that kind of seeing will affect the present and the eternal, even helping you to bear the present as the witnesses of Hebrews 11 that although they saw, endured such tremendous suffering. Their affections were set on things above and therefore they could endure what they did. But what happens if your affections are not set on things above? What if your affections are still set on your hairstyle, your house or your clothes? What happens when your eyes are not open to God's way of seeing things? Will you be able to endure the hour of temptation or trial if you cannot even handle the spoiling of your goods? You do not have to be witty or entertaining or amusing to others with your conversation just so that you can be accepted. That is guile. If you have this desire to constantly fill in the gap between conversations or to always feel you need to say something humorous to make others comfortable, you are not being true. You think you are being nice, but what if the discomfort will allow others to be real? When you make yourself attractable and relatable is it not you trying to manipulate the situation or people in your favour? Having yourself as an object that needs to be elevated? The centre of attention

through your looks, jokes or what about shock treatment in order to get attention? We should be free from ambition in all its forms and only to seek His glory.

When you are free of guile, you will see others as God sees them. You will not attain guile, unless you long for it. Purity of heart affects all seeing, even how we look at ourselves. A man who is guileless will not think of the consequences, what others will think of him, but speaks as God leads him. Not out of arrogance. No, he will speak not only what God requires him to speak, but even the tone necessary for speaking. Not in melodrama, as to gain an affect, but in truth as God sees it. His heart is broken over what has broken God's heart, and his heart is angry over what angers God. The same Jesus that addressed the woman at the well by exposing her sin in love, is the same Jesus that ran into the temple and started to overthrow the tables. But we are entrapped in the fear of man and sometimes even ask forgiveness for the truth. Let the truth defend for itself, but let us be true to the heart of it, whether in love or anger. A guileless person's very presence blows the whistle on those who purport to be true Christians, but are not. This is why Stephen suffered such a vile death in the hands of the Sadducees. He could see right through their murderous hearts and at the same time the Son of God next to the Father in the heavenlies.

Paul said that he is all things unto all men.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁹ For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

²⁰ And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

²¹ To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

²² To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.

²³ And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

First he states his disposition. That of a free man. Free from all men. What else could he have meant other than he is free of the approval of man? Free to want to impress or dote on appraisal. He was a free man with a clear conscience. Before man and God. Therefore he was all things unto all man. For what end? For the gospel's sake. One does not come to this place easily.

Deception creeps into our service of God where we think we are doing something for the gospel's sake when all the while, we have done it for ourselves. Pure motives are disposition of character that was sown in the ground of hearts that has been toiled and cleansed from all that would prevent it from growing. How will we be able to discern the fruit in another's life when we cannot even discern fake fruit from the real thing in our own lives? We have to be the real thing from the root up. There is no other way.

8.

Eternity

John said, “Love not the world, neither the things of this world. For he who loves the things of this world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2: 15 KJV) The spirit behind the things of this world, is the spirit of this world. Once again, it is completely anti-Christ. It is intended to lure us away from God, whether music, sport or movies. All of these things are intended to conform our minds to this world’s way and to prepare our hearts for the anti-Christ. Like hooks it finds a hold into our hearts and soon we find that we are unable to let go. Take something seemingly innocent as clothes. Clothes are for practical purposes of covering our nakedness. But it is marketed for so much more. It is sold as an expression of who we are, or can be, what values we hold and to even set ourselves ever so subtly above others. It exhibits prestige, wealth and class. People are willing to pay tremendous amounts for clothes and simplicity is thrown out the door to make room for extravagance. Having one or two pairs of shoes is not enough. Having a new outfit has to be accompanied with the latest matching shoes. In these all three cardinal sins have been committed, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. We literally buy into the values and standard of this world, and because of the guile in our own hearts, we heartily partake of the guile of this world.

Behind every lie, lies the great “I”. Deception is the name of the game and if you are willing to sell authenticity for the latest fashion and what it stands for, are you not the same as Esau who sold his birth right for a pot of lentil soup? And that is just clothes! Truth confronts us in every area of our daily lives once you open your eyes to see. We deny our Lord like Peter a lot more than three times a day. Politics, education, literature, science, art, law, commerce, entertainment, medicine, psychology and technology etc. are the things that constitute the things of this world. The spirit of this world is the director and author of all these categories by which he influences us. Come out of her, is the cry of the Lord. If we had to take all these categories out of the world, the world would no longer exist as a coherent system. How much are you a part of this world system? How much are you invested in the world and how much of the world is invested in you? If everybody does something, do you have to do it as well? Do you also need to have the latest technological gadget? Do you have to measure up to the guys? Have you ever come to the point where you see the feebleness and flakiness of it all? Have you ever been arrested by your own light weight in the spirit because the things of this world hold greater weight to you?

We have to ask ourselves how these things are affecting our relationship with the Lord. Are you able to spend two to three hours in front of Netflix or reading a book, but are unable to spend 30 minutes with God? Do you expect Him to be thankful that you offered Him some time out of your busy schedule? Is He not worthy to set those things aside for? We have to be able to ask ourselves whether what we are about and what we do is of this world or of God. In 1 John 5: 19 it states that the whole world lies in the evil one. Not a part, but the whole! God's glory must have pre-eminence in all our dealings. Unto Him is all the glory! Our first purpose of being must be His glory. God's glory is for eternity. If we are to live for God's glory, we have to bring eternity into the now. We live as if there is nothing beyond this life, but we have to demonstrate eternity to this world now. We are already seated in heavenly places now. (Ephesians 2: 6-10 KJV) So when we discern, we discern from the perspective of eternity. Because this life is only a small blimp on the line of eternity. Yet, we live our lives as if what this world is about, is all there is. When I say eternal perspective, I am not just referring to the fact that we as Christians have eternal life, but what I am about now affects eternity. Our eternity will be a continuation of now. It will not be as if we switch off a light in one room and switch another on in the next. Rather, we are told what we sow we will reap. If we sow according to the spirit, we will reap eternal life. Not just life in quantity, but quality of life. Even now, eternity is now. So when we discern, we know that what we see and sense by the Spirit will affect people, nations and eternity. It is no small matter, but because we are not eternally minded, we make these things temporal, not realizing and living with the true weight of the matters before us. We are not to be fixed in time like this world. We may be subject to this world, but our minds have to be renewed to think eternally. If not, we are not living in the truth, for that which is true is eternal. Heaven is eternal and eternity is truth. We are now in the entrance hall of eternity in preparation for living in eternity in His Kingdom for His glory. Paul encourages us to take the spoiling of our goods with joy, knowing in heaven we have a more enduring inheritance. This is living free from the system of this world. We will be free this present. We must take eternity into our deepest heart and consideration to be relevant in this world. Everything that is like this world will be accepted and applauded, even if it is "Christian", but when it is different, distinct and separated, then there will be taken note of and persecution will follow. The reason we are not persecuted is because we are irrelevant to this world and therefore ipso facto, not true. A cold and lukewarm church in the end is just "one of the guys". God's Word is our standard. The problem we have is that very often, that which is fake looks so real. The enemy tempts us through our senses. How are we to discern when it is so difficult to see the difference? How will we know the truth if the truth of God's Word does not abide in us and we do not actually obey all of the truth? Our seeing must be His seeing, and our hearing, must be His

hearing. To obtain this, we have to love the truth and be true. When we are saved, we make our exodus out of the world and we enter into the Kingdom of God. You are a new creation, and the old has passed away. Indeed, just like the waters flooded the earth in the days of Noah and destroyed the old, and from that came a new beginning, in the same way when we were baptized, we were buried into His death. This whole world under the water with us, so that we can start anew. For we are dead to the world and the world to us. We have been saved from uncleanness, unto holiness (1 Thessalonians 4: 7KJV). We are called to be holy. To be a royal priesthood, to teach the people the difference between that which is profane and holy. How will we do this if we are still so part of this world?

God's Word has to sanctify us, wash us and renew our minds. We have to abide in His Word, minute by minute. Because the Word is our standard. The Word is how God guides us through His Spirit. If it is not in alignment with God's Word and His holiness, we know we cannot as Christians do it. There is no glory without sacrifice and no sacrifice without the priestly function, no priests without consecration and sanctification. Holiness unto the Lord! It is because the priests of the Church and homes have been compromised that truth has fallen into the street and equity fails to enter in (Isaiah 59: 14b KJV). A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

“In the life of every servant of Christ and every ministry there comes a moment of truth. And if you do not face it and deal with it at that moment as the issue of faith and authenticity, from that moment on leaven has been introduced into the lump.” – Art Katz.

How often we choose not to deal with something because it will rattle the cage. We are not often willing to pay the price for truth, but at that very moment of silence, leaven starts to develop in our hearts and slowly starts to set a new standard, that which is lower than the truth. And that is a lie. Small compromises are leaven. And it only takes a small amount. We can maybe fool the whole world around us about our love for the Lord, but He made a clear distinction between those who love Him and those who do not. If you love Me, you will do My commandments (John 15 KJV). How much is your investment in this world? Do you stand to lose many friends should you go all out? Will you lose your husband or wife in the process? Will you be “uncool” in the eyes of the likes of those at work? Will you lose out on Netflix time, parties or even your church fellowship? No matter what it is you stand to lose, Jesus said, unless you are willing to lose mother, father, brother, sister or friend, or even hate your own life, you are not worthy to be My disciple (Matthew 10: 34 – 39 KJV). Maybe you think that everybody you know are Christians and that it would not be such a big deal if you became a lot more serious. But the moment you start asking God for

authenticity or truth in your life, is the moment when circumstances will change for you to bring exactly that which is unauthentic out of you...the lie. And those who do not hold the same creed and standard even though they call themselves Christians, will be the first to be offended by you, because your life will be a shining beacon into their grey state, and they will not like it one bit. Suddenly you are holier than thou. Suddenly you think you can judge others. Suddenly you are no more fun and do not want to do the things you used to do with them. It is then that instead of being a friend, a brother or a husband, you become a thorn in their very comfortable shoe called Compromise. You no longer get invited. No longer are you any fun and certain jokes cannot be told in front of you. And your discomfort about any topic in conversation that is not about the Lord is palpable, even to you. The more you mature in the Lord, the stranger you become and the lonelier. Tozer made a whole sermon called, "The saint must walk alone." Can you handle that? Can you handle being so alone that even in the company of many you are intensely aware of how alone you are. It has nothing to do with whether you have people around you, but everything to do with the fact that you are no longer under the veil and control of the spirit of this world. Jesus is the Cornerstone, rejected of men, but chosen of God, precious in His sight (1 Peter 2: 6 KJV). You can either be approved by man or approved by God. Eternity is always at stake and the enemy is doing his best to cause us to lose sight of this reality.

9.

A Living Sacrifice

Priestly ministry is a lot of cutting, a lot of blood, consecration and sacrifice in obedience, causing blood to splatter on you and others, but answered with glory by fire. The Priests in the book of Leviticus had to take the blood of the sacrifice and put it on everything. So we are to consecrate everything to the Lord and set it apart for Him. The Priests of the Old Testament were priestly in their service to God. They were set apart unto Him for service. They were not only offering sacrifices unto Him according to His precepts, but they themselves were living sacrifices. They had a single eye and because of that, God through the testimony of their lives, could trust them with the things He wanted to show them. Their discernment did not come cheap. Is your eating consecrated? Is your seeing consecrated? Have you consecrated your children? Your husband or wife? Have you consecrated your strengths and abilities, especially your spiritual gifts? Have you given Him your future, your house, your finances, your time? I am not talking about vows you make at the pulpit or those you made when you initially gave your life to Him. I am talking about the vows made in agony before the God who requires an ultimate sacrifice. Vows made in His presence where the giving was an actual giving with the full intention of not receiving it back, but for God to do with it just what He pleases. Have you cried in gut wrenching agony about the true state of your heart because you have allowed Him to rip the pretence off?

David says in Psalm 39: 11 – When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makes his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely man is vanity. Selah.

Do not think for one moment that David was a sissy or an overly emotional man. Way too much in touch with his feelings for your liking. God called David a man after His own heart. Seems to me like someone we can look up to. Just a study of all the Psalms and one can clearly see that God longs for us to cry out to Him. Have you ever cried for weeks over your sin, being so overwhelmed by your own sinfulness and knowing that only He can help you, because God knows, you have tried! For if He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all! But we prefer a Hillsong's Church, or "have your best life now" philosophy of life. We want to have it all now and on our terms. We do not like a religion that requires suffering or sacrifice. We would like to quote that He has done it all on the cross and that we need only to receive by faith. How blasphemous! God requires worship. He said that there will come a time when those who worship Him will worship

Him in Spirit and in truth. How will we ever do this if we think this to be separate from the role of priests? We are a peculiar people and a royal priesthood, to minister in holiness to Him. Holiness unto the Lord! Do we dare to claim the promises of the cross on the basis of faith without the lifestyle backing it up? God is fiercely jealous in His holy love for us. Put on the garments of God, put off the garments that have been spotted and stained with the spirit of this world. Quoting Art Katz, "Put on the vestments, put on the breastplates. Let them be attached with the heavenly cords, to the God who has called you!" For God is not going to enforce on us that which is heavenly and perfect as long as we are satisfied with something less.

You do not learn priesthood, you inherit it and there has to be a death. Priesthood is resurrection life. All must be sanctified. A life hidden before the throne of God, consecrated and prostrated before Him. It is a calling where you know what it means to lay prostrate and broken before the Lord and knowing that unless He resurrects you, you are the most pitiful worm alive that deserves hell. And yet He loves you.

Paul states that the world has been crucified unto him and him unto the world (Galatians 2: 20 KJV). There is no other way by which we can be delivered, but through the cross. This is not a symbolic statement, but an actual felt deliverance in every area of your being - soul, spirit and body. It is being a living sacrifice. Christ lived in such a spotless, holy way in order to be the perfect sacrifice on the cross. A well-pleasing sacrifice unto the Father, so that we may in His words of "follow Me" walk as He walked. How? By taking up our own cross daily and by applying the principles of this cross to our own lives in authenticity and not in name only. This is not works unto salvation, this is salvation unto good works. This is sanctification unto holiness, without which no one will see God. You can proclaim to all that you were made holy unto the Lord and in the Lord when you were saved, but if your life testifies against you, you are a phony. I am not saying that we do not sin, I am saying that there must be a perpetual pursuit after holiness and to live by faith on a daily basis, and not just in the first 30 minutes of your morning. This is a lifestyle. And if you truly live it, they will hate you. Are you being persecuted for the life you now live? Jesus said in John 15 to His disciples, "if they hated Me, they will hate you too." Have you ever asked yourself why you are NOT hated? The church is the "called out ones" – the ecclesia. If God has called you out at all then He has called you to live in spirit outside the world system. This is a place we already occupy. We are seated with Him in heavenly places, but we have to live in this world, whilst not being of this world. We are called out! We are from above. Please understand that true discernment is not cheap, but in fact very costly. God in His grace does give a gift of discernment, but those who abide in Him, live from the place of rest, where the

gift has been replaced by the Giver. This is Christ incarnate in us – the mystery of Godliness (1 Timothy 3: 16 KJV). The Spirit fills the sanctified vessel prepared for Him and not only does the vessel abide in Him, but the Spirit abides in the vessel – all the time. This kind of discernment becomes as natural as breathing.

In the parable of the ten virgins there were five wise virgins who had the oil for the lamps when the Bridegroom's call came. The other five foolish virgins had to go buy oil. Oil is a symbol for anointing, but that of an olive that has been crushed in order to produce this oil. It came with a price. The five wise virgins were prepared because the oil was an abiding ingredient in their lamps. It is not that the foolish virgins did not have light, but their oil was finished. They had to get more and were not allowed to enter into the wedding feast. All were virgins, indicating that they were washed, their garments were made clean, but the issue was the oil. The Holy Spirit must abide in us, not just come to visit every now and then when we need Him. Every area of your life has to go through the process of being set free, washed and sanctified. This transforms you by having your mind renewed, where you are no longer conformed to this world. In fact, it makes you quite the opposite of the world. Every area of your body, which includes your habits, your work, your eyes, ears, mouth and your talents has to go through this process. The same goes for your soul, which is your intellect, your emotions and your will. And then lastly your spirit, which is basically your spiritual pride, religious works, motives and your very life. This is ultimate. This is also why there are many on the broad way, but oh so few on the narrow. However, your ability to discern is tainted and veiled to the degree that God has not dealt with you in these areas. This is not to say that God cannot and will not on occasion give the gift of discernment in a specific area where it is needed, but I am talking about more than an occasional moment of ministry. I am talking about a life of discernment.

10.

The Elijah Company

Can you say with sincerity that you love truth and have asked God to shed His light on all that is within you that is not true? How do you expect to be able to discern when that which is a lie and that which is true, look strikingly similar? Unless you are a vital unit with the truth, you will not be able to discern in a situation like this. It will have to be something that you instinctively are able to discern. They say that people who work with money all day long, year in and year out, instinctively know the true from the false. Not because they are familiar with the false, but their familiarity with the true gives them that particular edge in their discernment.

We are to drink of the pure living waters of God, the Living Word, purified as silver, tried in a furnace of earth. Jesus told the woman at the well that rivers of living water will flow from her innermost being. This is the Word of God. Right after that He said that there will come a time when those who worship Him will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. We are called to be Elijah's in this present age, confronting the Baal's and their prophets, saying, "Surely as the Lord my God lives" having encountered the living God and having His pure words flowing from our innermost being. How do you confront that which is a lie? With the truth. If you are not true in yourself, the enemy will recognise this in you and you will not be able to call the fire down. Jesus said unto His disciples that He would not come again, until Elijah first comes and restores all things. The Church is to function corporately in the Prophetic within the nations as the Church, establishing the standard of God, showing the distinction between the holy and profane, the truth and the lie. We need to understand that our words will be purified by trials, when we step forward to make ourselves available unto God in this age. Our yea and nay will be tested and be exposed for the light weight that it is. Our lives are full of empty vows and we think this has no consequences. We think that this kind of leaven is considered a white lie, or just wishful thinking, but in reality we have allowed leaven to enter, and it spreads not only through our own lives, but those of our children. They do it, because they see we do it! If our own words often fall to the ground because of our own lack of Godly fear, what makes us think that when we stand up against the principalities and powers in the air, it will carry any weight with them? In fact, secretly we fear that should we address them, they might laugh at us, knowing that we are not who we profess to be. Truth in our lives has to be the real thing, every time, even if it is to our own hurt or shames us or others. If God said that Elijah will first return before He comes again, does it not stand to

reason that to be like Elijah, our character has to be conformed to such a one as Elijah? And just what kind of moulding does it take to make an Elijah? What kind of person do we need to be so that not one word we speak will fall to the ground?

11.

Having an Ear to Hear and a Mouth to Speak

Isaiah 50: 4 says the Lord has given me the mouth of the learned that I may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear like the learned.

This is Father who takes it upon Himself to mould us and make us because we are His workmanship in Christ Jesus unto good works which He has before ordained that we may walk in them – Ephesians 2: 10 KJV and Philippians 1: 6 says “being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Father is actively working in us through His Spirit and His Word and life’s circumstances to give us a mouth and ear of the learned. In Psalm 32: 8 He says, I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go, I will guide you with My eye. We would like our challenges to be quite straightforward, like making a choice between what is wrong and right. But what if you have to decide between two rights? Or God requires of you something that is contrary to His word? Like Peter with the dream of unclean animals? What if Peter did not know God as he did? What would the consequences of that have been? Or take for example Elijah who had ravens feeding him. These are also unclean animals. A raven, not a clean and pure dove? What if God requires you to do contrary to what is required of you by your family? What if His requirement is that you leave them on some mission for Him? You may be willing, but that initial step into that direction may cause an upheaval within the usually tranquil surroundings you have been accustomed to. Will you be able to hear clearly when so many other voices compete for your submission? What about the taunts and ridicules from other believers stating that you are taking things too far? You are way too serious, even fanatical. Surely God will not ask this of you? How will you recognise His voice when you have not learned out of intimacy His dealings with you and therefore His nature? The promptings of the Spirit of truth will have to have already become something that you are familiar with, without His felt presence or the hearing of His voice. Like a wife and husband in the same room but at opposite ends, knowing when the other wants to leave without any of the two saying a single word. Can you hear that voice and prompting when everything else around you is in opposition to you and what you stand for? For when you do, He will guide you into all truth. In that moment your preference is irrelevant, only your obedience. Are you willing to speak the truth, knowing that it may very well cost you a friendship? Not maliciously, but because you know

it is what God is requiring you to do. Are you willing to die to your own needs, so that His needs may be met in your friend? Does He have your mouth and ear?

When we are moved by our emotions such as compassion and anger, or our own identification with a situation, we are acting from out of ourselves. God has effectively not moved us and this will lead to our destruction. Our emotions must never be our walk. The just shall live by faith (Romans 1: 17 KJV). We say things because we think it is expected of us. God desires that our spiritual senses would be so exercised that we would pick up in the midst of the rush of this world, the subtle quiet voice of His Spirit, even in the mundane of everyday life. When our emotions are stirred, it can easily drown the still small voice of the Spirit. We must control our emotions and not our emotions control us. This takes vigilance and discipline in temperance. Having an ear to hear is also a matter of conscience. Strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men (Acts 24: 16 KJV). We are to keep our conscience clear before God and man. This means to follow peace with all men, and to not do anything out of deceit or guile. If we refuse any walls to build up between us and God and those around us, the enemy cannot find occasion to build a case against us as the accuser or cause division between us. We will in effect be fulfilling the law – to love the Lord with all our heart, mind and strength and our neighbour as ourselves. This is something we have to grow in, but we must want it with all our hearts. The Lord will be faithful to bring situations along our way to help us see areas we still need to deal with, and in those moments we are to develop the ear of our conscience. This is a very soft voice, not audible, but within the inner-man. It is also like a dove, for with the slightest movement, it is gone. So it will take diligence to watch and pray at all times. It is also in those very moments that the enemy hopes that you would not react to your conscience, because that which you ignore, is just the gap he needs to infiltrate with the purpose to steal, kill and destroy. At all times his desire is to steal the Word of God from us.

If we fail to develop this muscle of our inner-ear of our conscience, we will remain on the defensive instead of the offensive with the enemy. The moment our conscience whispers, is the moment we need to take a thought captive. If we do not, emotion will follow, with its reasoning and we will react in a split second. But if from the onset we take a thought captive, we then have the opportunity to bring it into subjection to the Word of God and not be swayed by our emotions. This is no easy task, but God's grace is sufficient. His aim is not just temperance, but also the development of our sensitivity to His voice. Seize every opportunity to practise this. Be diligent and vigilant and you will notice that your discernment will grow as well. When we start to mature in our discernment we will find that we are no longer swayed or moved by our own emotions or

those of others. In fact, we will start to ask ourselves why a person is reacting emotionally in a certain matter. Not all conversations need to be with so much emotion, because very often it is a means of subtle manipulation in order to gain a reaction. Very often people feel that their audience does not get the full impact of what they are trying to convey, and to add some emotions would often stir people. The same can very well be said of worship services where if our lives are not in sync with what we sing, there is no truth – just like there is no peace without truth. How often do we sing I surrender all, but all is not surrendered? Or how often do we sing vows unto the Lord and not even think about what we sing, because we have sung the same song over and over? It is so easy for us to sing along out of habit or peer pressure, raise our hands and dance before the Lord, but not in authenticity? Does God accept this kind of worship and are we sensitive to the whisper of our conscience in the presence of such loud music and emotional highs? Even the preacher or motivational speaker speaks with such persuasiveness and emotion that the whole church is swept up in repeating words and amen. Are we sensitive to such subtle manipulation? This does not mean that we should not participate or feel nothing, but the issue is authenticity and truth. Only as God deals with our own subtle manipulations and subtleties will we be able to recognise it in others. We have to judge ourselves first and foremost, and also never stop asking God to judge us, as we remain humble before Him, always willing to see it in ourselves first. I would like to interject here that from the onset that this kind of life must be extremely depressing and grey, but to the contrary obedience works such a joy and intimacy with the Lord, that this scripture comes true where we say the Lord is the joy of my salvation! It is a joy unexplainable and unrelenting. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord searching all the inward parts of the belly – our guts! (Proverbs 20: 27 KJV) God searches our hearts. When our eyes are like a dove's eye, single and focused on Him and His word, our whole body will be full of light. But if the light in us is dark, meaning if the Word is not in us, our whole body is full of darkness. How great is that darkness and therefore many stumble even in the daytime! If your eye is the lamp of your body, it stands to reason that when it is dark, you have closed your eyes to the truth. You have hardened your heart and in the process your conscience is seared. Sometimes we choose to follow the path of peace by choosing our battles and not allowing small or insignificant things to upset us or cause us to get angry, but if we do not speak the truth in love and address the issue, it will just simply go and lie in a corner of our hearts and fester. This can even take years before we recognise this, because according to us we have forgiven the person. But unless you have discussed and talked through that which causes offense, it will turn into a seed of resentment, which in turn will grow into a root of bitterness, defiling many. (Hebrews 12: 15 KJV) And because we have not addressed the issue, our hearts become hard, and our conscience callous. We may have had good

intentions, but the Lord never teaches us to sweep issues under the rug. Someone is bound to trip over it. How often has this happened between parents and children, or between couples? Before we know it, we find ourselves digging up old stuff. But the stuff is not old, it was just hidden, because we chose not to deal with it. Our eyes, ears and thoughts are all spiritual doors to our hearts or our conscience. This is why we need to diligently keep our heart for out of it flows the issues of life. When something flows in and out, it is a doorway. We allow things in and out through the doorways. This includes our speaking. What we expose ourselves to will either harden our conscience or make it more sensitive. Purity of heart is a process of which the reward is a sensitive conscience. Not just sensitive to sin, but to God. Pure heart equals pure vision, pure hearing and pure speaking. All our senses have to be sanctified and this is a long process, but with each victory there is growth, and our foundation in Christ becomes more sturdy and stable, so that we are able to remain in His rest in the fiercest storms of life. He is faithful to keep us. He is our foundation. This is why He mentioned to the disciples that the wise man built his house (life) upon the Rock (Matthew 7: 24 - 27 KJV). This Rock is Christ and Christ is the Word. Our lives must be built on the Word of God. We must not deceive ourselves if this is not so, especially if the fruit of our lives are testifying contrary to the fruit of the Spirit. Just because we can quote numerous scriptures, and even have been preaching for many years, does not constitute a life built upon the Rock. Jesus said, "He who hears My Word and does it, is like this wise man who built his house upon the Rock." (Matthew 7: 24 – 27 KJV) Let us not deceive ourselves.

There is a difference between that which emanates from our flesh and that has its origin in His Spirit.

Art Katz

Trading the Good for the Perfect

Abstaining from obvious sins like swearing, stealing, lying etc. is good, but it is just the beginning. Some still struggle just to have a regular quiet time and others are still trying to give up bad habits. Now we are not to despise the days of small beginnings, but there has to be growth. A spiritual life that is standing still is a statue. It is an idea and not a living organism that is part of a body. We are living stones, living stones that make up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2: 5 KJV).

1 Corinthians 10: 23 states, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not profitable: All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” What this in effect means is that just because you are allowed to do something, does not mean you should do it. Just because it looks and sound doctrinally sound does not mean it is His will. The Lord makes it clear that we are to acknowledge Him in ALL our ways. If we do not, the enemy will do whatever it takes to distract us with what is good, being the angel of light. He will come in his religious garb and set a trap, a net for you to get caught in. All the while keeping you busy with what is lawful, but alas not profitable. Even our obsession with conspiracy theories can be a trap. Often all this does is to distract us and take our eyes off Him and unto the enemy. The enemy also often gets it right to either defile us through these videos in our search for truth or just simply keep us busy with the things of this world, and not The Truth. We can get so engrossed in what the enemy is planning these days that we fail to prepare ourselves sufficiently in our hearts for what is coming. Greater unfortunately is our prepping of our physical condition than our spiritual condition. We fear the enemy more than what we fear God. This is clear by what we are about and with whom we spend the most of our time. It is sometimes necessary to see these things, but we do not have to see all of them, and we have to have discipline, because it is a “time-stealer” and distracts us from our true devotion to the Lord. We become more focused on the future events of this world than what God is busy doing in us and have us do in these future events.

As we grow in the Lord our devotion towards Him grows more and more where the very act of doing that which is lawful brings such remorse as if it is the greatest sin. It truly feels like defilement and adultery even though in essence it is not. But the disobedience tears at one’s heart. Having abandoned ourselves to Him, we find ourselves in the act of doing what is good and acceptable, but we yearn for the perfect. We no longer want to justify. Knowing that being guilty of doing that which is lawful, but not in His perfect will but permissible will, we have sinned.

Others might not see it in the same light, but they are not walking the same narrow way God has called us to, even though they have been called as well. For instance, we may feel that we need to support someone financially, but in that given moment it may be God's permissible will, but not His perfect will. Therein lies the great danger of deception, merely by the fact that it is permissible and good, and hence the urge to justify, even with scripture. This requires a greater dependency on a moment to moment basis because all your moments have been consecrated to Him and is no longer yours to use for your pleasure. He is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.

Romans 12: 1 – 2 states, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God."

Are we sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit when we stand before a decision of whether we are to help someone or not? We may have the means and even the circumstances may cause us to think that it is divine providence, but are we able to discern between the good, the acceptable and the perfect will of God?

This is a progressive growth in the Lord. Many are not able to give up certain things unless the Lord has prepared their hearts. He meets us at our need and gives us grace when we ask for help in a time of need. Very often we just cannot give up something, but when we call on Him, He provides the strength. But the more we mature in the Lord, the greater the crosses. Greater suffering is required, which inevitably means greater death in us.

Paul said the following to the Philippians:

Philippians 3:10-14 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

When we are in the world, we live from the outside in. We live from our flesh and our desires, driven and controlled by our emotions and our spirit stays asleep. However, when we are born again, we are taught to live from our spirit, to control our soul by the Spirit and to bring our body into subjection. We live from the inside out. The more mature we become in the Lord, the greater the price the flesh has to pay. Even to the extent of physical death, should God require it. The unity in the Lord is to such an extent that there is a desire to share in His sufferings, not just

spiritually, but eventually death itself. The earlier martyrs considered it an immense honour to die for Christ. Hebrews 11 testifies of these amazing saints of God.

13.

How Bright Is Your Light?

Nathaniel came to the Lord not having spoken one word to Him and yet right from the onset was able to identify Him as the Son of the Living God. This was long before Peter made his well-known profession. The Lord's first words about Nathaniel was, "Look, an Israelite in whom there is no guile!" That is, without deceit. No ulterior motives and no consideration of self. In Matthew 5 Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be poor in spirit is not just to have a humble opinion of yourself, but it is to be void of any consideration for yourself. When God uses you or chooses not to, makes no difference. If someone approves or not, does not affect you. You are in a place where you are not the consideration of the issue at hand, but only Him. He has pre-eminence in all. A man that is pure in heart. His promise to him was that he would see so much more. Many of us want to be able to see things in the spirit, to have true discernment, but few are willing to pay the price for purity of heart.

Having said already more than enough about truth in the inner-man, and about coming out of this world, there is also the issue of the renewing of our mind. You see, we have been conformed to this world's way of thinking and doing so since birth. Psalm 19:8 says that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandments of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. According to Strong's, enlightening is like the break of day, where the sun as it breaks through the morning enlightens everything – nothing is hidden. The sun becomes the eye of the landscape. Seeing and hearing are the issue of discernment, which is the issue of God's Word in our heart. Science has proven that the colour white has the colour spectrum of the rainbow. This is why we see a rainbow in the sky because of the water particles in the air and the sunlight. However, we cannot see these colours with our naked eye when we look at the colour white. God wants us to see in colour in the spirit, but we are colour blind and not even aware of it. We see clearly in the natural, but we are colour blind in the spirit, or just totally blind. He says, who is blind as my servant who has eyes, or deaf as my servant who has ears! God wants us to know that there is so much more, but we think it is for us personally. His Word must find entrance into our hearts and cleanse us thoroughly so that we can see. He wants to wash us with the water of His Word. Psalm 18 says that He will light my candle, and He will enlighten my darkness. It is when we allow the Lord to come with the light of His Word to convict us of areas we need to deal with that the purification process starts. The Holy Spirit comes and by revelation with Godly repentance strips

us of all our filthiness of sin and dresses us in the righteousness of God, in clean white linen. Around the throne of God is a rainbow revealing His glory and we shine in His righteousness like the rainbow in this dark world. This is a process and not a once-off encounter. The greater the cleansing, the greater the intimacy, the more we walk in the light, the better we see, or discern. Do not confuse intimacy with discernment. There are many who regard their relationship with the Lord as very intimate, but are deceived in many ways. In Matthew 6: 22 - 23 the Lord reminds us that the eye is the lamp of the body. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness how great is that darkness! Obviously He is not referring to our physical eye, but our focus, be that on the world, or on His Kingdom. A single eye as I mentioned before is dove's eyes. In the Song of Solomon He tells the Shulamite that she has dove's eyes. This is the quality of character He is seeking in His bride. They only look to Him. They are not easily distracted. Proverbs 4: 25 says, Let your eyes look straight on and your eyelids look before you. This is talking not only about distraction, but focus. It states that we must ponder the path of our feet and establish our ways. In other words, we must walk in the light, which is being obedient to His word. The key to the enlightenment of our seeing, of our discernment is obedience to the Word of God in humbleness. The entrance of Your word gives light and understanding to the simple, says David. We must have the desire to see. We cannot say we love the truth, yet do not seek to see. But that seeing has to start with ourselves. It is only in the light of His Word that we can see as we ought to, by faith - always by faith. We may look on the things of God, but our view is very much like stained glass. Unable to see as He sees, because our perceptions, understanding and worldview, is still unchallenged. Unchallenged by how different He is from us. For My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts are not your thoughts (Isaiah 55: 8 - 9 KJV). We may be able to quote all the verses, but when it comes to the discernment, we are like a blunt knife. Our love of the truth cannot be separated from our love for the Word of God and resulting in the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit. When you read Psalm 119 written by David, one cannot but be amazed by his love for the Word of God. It holds his highest esteem and heart. The Word of God and our understanding of the Word is like window cleaning for our vision, our discernment. We have to meditate, read and study the Word. There is life and light in the Word. He sent His Word and healed our disease (Psalm 107: 20 KJV). It has to be on our minds all the time. This can only come through diligence and a single eye. Just like the Pharisees that knew the scriptures, they did not have the Spirit to enlighten them, so that they would recognise the Word standing before them. But Peter, a fisherman, who knew not the scriptures as they did, received the revelation of who Jesus was. Why? I believe it was because of spiritual pride. Pride comes before a fall. This is

because pride blinds and causes us to walk in darkness. The Pharisees were angry because the guards disregarded their orders to bring Jesus to them. But the guard's answer was that they have never heard anyone speak with such authority before. The Pharisees were outraged, and their arrogant reply was, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him?" They even cursed the "commoners" who did not know the law, as beneath them. But the Lord uses the foolish to confound the wise. Spiritual pride made them blind. This is why Jesus told His disciples to do everything that the Pharisees said they must do, but He admonished them that their righteousness has to exceed that of the Pharisees. He was warning them of the leaven of pride in their hearts that leavens the whole lump. Even to the extent that they could not see the Messiah standing right in front of their very own eyes.

We are to minister to one another in the Church and be a light unto this world. Jesus said, let your light so shine that the world may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5: 15 – 16 KJV). However, God desires that we will move and grow into maturity, for it is not the gifts of the Spirit nor our good works that will sustain us during tribulation and persecution, but character and the power of the Holy Spirit. There will be many with the gifts of the Spirit, but unless they have died to their life, they will not be able to die for Christ in the great tribulation. This character is one forged and tried by fire and testing, to come out pure and undefiled so that we may be vessels fit to carry such a treasure as the Holy Spirit within, not in part but with the fullness of God, that we may bear fruit.

Lucifer is known as the light bearer, but we are the true light bearers. Jesus said, you are the light of the world, and we shine as bright lights in this Dark Age. And how is this age? For in the last days many people's hearts will grow cold and they will be haters of truth. Your light only shines as bright as you authentically are the truth in yourself.

Once again it is a matter of purity of heart. What we need to consider is the union between the purity of heart and the Word of God. God's word is light, and the purity of the vessel determines how bright that light shines in this world. That very light is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, in times of darkness (Psalm 119: 105 KJV).

In conclusion Proverbs 20: 12 says "the hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made both of them." Has the Lord made your ear to hear and your eye to see? Has He enlightened the understanding of your mind by the purity of your heart, by the washing of His Word, and by fire? Have you allowed Him to begin this work in you? Blessed are those who thirst after righteousness

for they shall be satisfied (Matthew 5: 6 KJV). Jesus said to the woman at the well, “If you drink of this water you will never thirst again.” (John 4 KJV) Are you thirsty for His Word or are you thirsty for the things of this world? Are you longing more for financial prosperity, family unity and a vacation? Are you longing more for a happy marriage than for Him? The Word says that where your treasure is there your heart will be also. Where is your treasure? Where do you spend the majority of your time? In the kitchen? In front of the TV, with friends? On Pinterest, on YouTube or Netflix? All these are wells from which you drink and how murky and defiled are the wells you regularly drink from? Is it any wonder that you find that your pure devotion to the Lord is no longer burning as strong as it used to? Is it a hassle to get up in the morning to spend time with the Lord and read His Word? Is it a struggle to pray longer than 30 minutes? Can you tell someone on a daily basis what God has shown you that morning or what specifically He is busy with you at the moment? If you find difficulty answering these questions or come up with a multitude of justifications, you need to accept the fact that you are lukewarm. This should scare the “hibby jibbies” out of you, because you then effectively hold no threat to the enemy. In fact, He can just keep you right there lulling you to sleep day to day, because he will find you there the next day on your seat, doing exactly the same thing you have done for the past 15 – 20 years. May a holy discontentment grab you by the heart and propel you out of your seat! In Revelation 2 Jesus stood in the midst of seven lampstands, which resembles the Churches of the last age. God says to the church in Ephesus that she has left her first love, and that He will remove her candlestick out of its place, except she repents. In Jewish tradition when a bride and bridegroom gets engaged, the bridegroom goes away for an unknown period of time to prepare a home for him and his bride. She does not know when he will return. However, as a token of her devotion to him and proclaiming that she will remain loyal and pure for him in this time that he is gone, she will light a candle every night in her bedroom, so that when he returns, he will know that she has been waiting for him. What an amazing picture of the Bride of Christ remaining pure and loyal to her heavenly Bridegroom and actively waiting for Him. Her candle is lit. Just like the five wise virgins.

Will He find you waiting for Him? Will He find you preparing and making ready for the wedding feast? I am not asking whether you have 10 or 20 years ago given your life to Him. I am asking whether you are daily, actively making sure that your wedding dress is spotless and that your lamp is lit? Is your candle burning for the Lord? The whole world and unfortunately the apostate bride is no longer waiting or even longing for His return. They will agree with us that it is the end of days, but no matter how bad it gets out there, they still remain unmotivated to seek God in this

time. The Church has compromised so much and looks so much like the world today. Her candle no longer burns and only a remnant is left. It is indeed like the days of Elijah where there was only a remnant left. If the church's candle has grown so dim, what is her ability to discern then? How will she be a true witness to this ever darkening world? She thinks she still has time, but the five foolish virgins were caught unaware, did not have oil and were not allowed into the wedding feast. All I can ask is that you will be truthful about the true state of your walk with the Lord. He longs to use us, but He has to cleanse us first. He has to train us and deal with us exactly as He knows is necessary according to the works which He has before ordained, that we should walk in it. He knows the plans He has for us, but we have to be willing to walk in covenant with Him and do things His way.

It is He alone that enlightens our understanding. It is He alone as Psalm 18 states that will light our candles and enlighten our darkness. But how can He do that unless you are willing to come into the light of His judgment to expose the darkness in you so that He in His mercy can lift you up in resurrection life, once you have repented from out of a sincere heart.

John 3: 19 – 21 says, “And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be approved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. Did you catch that – doeth truth? Our light in this world shines brighter and brighter the more we expose our dark hearts to the presence of His light and allow Him to deal with it. For this reason He has come, so that He may destroy the works of darkness!

2 Peter 1: 5 says that we must diligently add to our faith virtue, to our virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness, charity. Then in verse 9 it says that he that does not abound in these things is blind and cannot see afar off and has forgotten that Christ has cleansed him of his old sins. This speaks of certain characteristics we need so that we will be able to have the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. These very characteristics help us see, without them we are blind. I believe that the more we give diligence to grow in these areas the clearer we will see. The Lord showed someone dear to me that these characteristics are what Father gives us in order for us not only to grow but also to make it through this life. He showed her that it is a seed, and that we have to tend to these seeds so that they may grow and bring forth fruit. These seeds are also His promises to us to have His divine character. They are our very foundation. When our lives

are built on this foundation, we will become stable and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. God wants His church to grow in maturity. Allow the Holy Spirit to do a thorough work in you, no matter the cost and no matter how long.

We are oaks of righteousness, sturdy and giving shade to those in need. Storms may come and go, but because we grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, we are able to stand. Oaks are also very tall, they have a very good perspective and view on life. They see much further than the smaller trees.

I hope you can see by now that discernment is more than just a gift, it is who you are in Him. It is a heart purified by truth and the more that truth sets a person free, the brighter the light shines in him. The eye is the lamp of the body, if thine eye be single, thine whole body will be full of light.

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Part 2

DISCIPLINE

Love precedes discipline – John Owen

We must face the fact that many today are notoriously careless in their living. This attitude finds its way into the church. We have liberty, we have money, and we live in comparative luxury. As a result, discipline practically has disappeared. What would a violin solo sound like if the strings on the musician's instrument were all hanging loose, not stretched tight, not "disciplined"?

- A. W. Tozer

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Salvation is Only the Beginning

In the Utmost for His Highest Devotional, April 8th, Oswald Chambers wrote: Thank God for the glorious and majestic truth that His Spirit can work the very nature of Jesus into us, if we will obey Him.

God knows that His children are unable to fulfil the law that He has made for us. To love Him with our whole heart, mind and strength and the second one, like unto the first, to love our neighbour as ourselves. The Word says that He knows what is in the heart of man.

John 2:24-25 King James Version (KJV)

²⁴ But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Hebrews 4:13 King James Version (KJV)

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

God, in His great mercy, has given us His Spirit to fulfil these two laws in us and through us. The power and the nature of the Spirit of God is manifest in us more and more as we mature in obedience to the Spirit's guidance in all things. Jesus told His disciples in John 14 that the Father would send His Spirit to guide us into all truth and that He would remind us of the things He said. He said that it is expedient for them that He should go in order that the Holy Spirit may come to dwell in them. This is not just God with us, but God in us. A few years ago I was complaining to the Lord about how difficult it was for me to do what He asked of me at that time. I reminded Him that He was right in front of Peter on the water at the time of the storm. The Lord replied, "Yes, I was in front of Peter, but I am in you." Case closed. When we are subject to Him in all things and humbly walk in obedience to Him, He gives us His power, nature and He teaches us to walk by faith. We do not receive His nature just from being born again. Life after the birth testifies of this reality in most of the Christians we encounter. Something is working within us, whilst He demonstrates His life without. Very often we will not even be aware of what He is slowly and intricately weaving in our innermost being, and other times we will be painfully aware. We are to

be an expression of Jesus, just as Jesus was the expression of the Father. Paul calls us living epistles in 2 Cor. 3: 1 – 3. But these epistles are not written on stone, but on the heart. We are His witnesses, His messengers. Not giving a message, but being the message. God desires His image to be restored in us. The same image that Adam and Eve were made in at the beginning of creation. The whole of creation is in travail awaiting the adoption of the sons of God, which is God's restoration not only of man, but of creation itself. It will be a cosmic event that the earth has been groaning and travailing for since the fall. We need to consider the magnitude of the work that is being done in us. If we have a limited view of this work, we will be marginalising the cosmic event that it is and also the reason behind His severe dealings with us. It is a cosmic event because at the very end, God's cosmic purpose for creation will be fulfilled. His glory, His power and His Kingdom forever. We think humanly, where we ought to think spiritually. This adoption is not just to be resurrected and to receive glorified bodies, but this adoption expresses itself in resurrection life in the now. Now is the time that we are learning how to walk by the Spirit so that we may rule and reign in His Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is here! When the Holy Spirit together with our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2: 12 KJV) work in us, He prepares and cleanses us through the process of sanctification. We need to understand that salvation is the beginning. Everything from our justification, predestination and sanctification is for the incarnation of God in man. Just as Jesus was the express image of the Father in His human capacity, so are we the express image of the Son. We cannot be this in word only, but in authenticity. He is the patterned Son, the Author and Finisher of our faith. We are looking to Jesus not only to inspire us, but to imitate Him, in authenticity. Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." This is why we are admonished to walk as He walked. He would not require us to do something without providing the means. The just shall LIVE by faith! Incarnation is the final expression of redemption. The very work the Spirit does in us in times of discipline and testing, prepares us as the temple of God, to be indwelt by Him and us in Him. Solomon's temple was meticulously prepared for the express purpose that God's glory would fill it. God was very specific about every little detail He gave to Solomon in the building of this glorious temple. And yet, the Creator of all things, have chosen not only to dwell on earth being born from a virgin, but to now dwell in us by His Spirit. In the same way our bodies, our temples are prepared for the infilling of His glory. And if God is meticulous about a building, how much more the temple of His Spirit? His glory is His resurrection life, not just the infilling of the Holy Spirit so that we may receive His gifts, but that we would be the express image of His Son. This glorifies the Father

when He sees His Son in us. This is the very thing the enemy fears. He does not fear us, he fears Christ in us!

One thing you will read repeatedly here is that resurrection life is preceded by death. Repetition does no harm, it reinforces and this truth has to be imprinted onto our hearts. It is the first thing that needs to come to our minds when we are faced with anything. “In what area here must I die so that I may receive His life in me?” This is a spiritual principle that has to be lived daily. Paul said, I die daily and so do we need to do also. It

When the Holy Spirit takes charge of your life, He will expect unquestioning obedience in everything. He will not tolerate in you the “self-sins” even though are permitted and excused by most Christians.

A W Tozer.

will be two-fold. The first is that He will by divine providence allow certain situations to cross our path. These situations will cause our faith to be tested and tried. Our faith will grow and we will receive wisdom as we submit to the promptings of the Spirit. However, we often mistake these circumstances as an attack from the enemy, forgetting that Father allowed it. This is to say if we did not open a door through deliberate sin. The second way of dying daily is where we live in obedience to what He teaches us in renewing our minds. Here we die to our will not only in the big things, but also in every detail of our lives. The one area calls for restraint, and the other for discipline. Both of these develop the fruit of self-control, which is extremely important if we want this resurrection life now. This resurrection life will not be seen just in set apart moments, but in our walk, our life and our everyday occurrences. These two ways of daily dying are intertwined. The one will cause us to cry to Him in dependency, whilst the other will cause us to walk in faith. Dependency and faith are one.

These trying circumstances can either be seen as coming from man or we can see that man is merely the agent and God the author. It is easier for us to want to blame the enemy. Unfortunately, our sinful behaviour does open doors for the enemy to come and steal and destroy, as we through deliberate sin gave him the legal right to do just that. We have to however ask ourselves why God allowed that particular situation to cross our path, whether out of sin or not. Years ago I had a miscarriage and in my anger I vented myself in arrogance towards the Lord for not preventing it from happening. His answer was clear and concise. He said, “Either I am good or I am not. But I am not in between.” There is no shadow of turning with Him. I knew right away that even if I did not fully understand it, I had to lean on His goodness. I had to lean on the fact that He knows the future. That all my days have been written in His book. I had a choice to make. Either He is good or He is not. This also led me to understand that nothing can happen to me without God giving the enemy permission. I once read the statement that whatever comes across your life, no

matter how bad, had to go through God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit to get to me. Therefore it must have great purpose. This brought me much comfort knowing how much He loves me and that nothing ever happens to me without His foreknowledge. And when it does, I know that it will always be for my good, no matter how difficult it is. It also reminded me of Job. Satan was asked by God where he has been. To which he replied that he was roaming to and fro and up and down on the earth. God asked Him whether he has seen righteous Job. He replied that the only reason Job was so righteous was because of God's hedge around him. Now, let's think about this. Do you think the Lord did not know that Satan would say this? And do you think that the Lord did not know all the plans the enemy had for Job's destruction? Of course He did! So why did He who is a righteous judge and loving Father allow this horrible thing to happen to righteous Job? Was Job not doing everything right? There has been a lot of speculation through the years. Maybe Job was secretly prideful of His relationship with the Lord? After all, it is easy to love and worship the Lord when things are going well, but how do you fair when it seems as if the hordes of hell have only eyes for you? How do you worship and love Him then? When you lose a husband, wife, child, material wealth and prestige like Job? You become a miserable sod on top of a heap of ash. All your friends telling you that you have completely lost your way and those closest to you tell you to cut your losses and make other plans to survive. You cannot just sit there and do nothing! Because surely you have done something very wrong to be going through this hell on earth. Can we believe that Job's story is our story? Can you believe that Job's life resembles the way of God with the righteous? Those whom He has chosen to serve Him in Spirit and in Truth? He will build us up and bring us to ashes, and it will all be for His glory. For unless we know Him in our best and worst circumstances as a good God, the way He wants to be known, how will we be able to be that expression to those who are living desperate lives devoid of reality and truth? Those who themselves go through these calamities and desperately need answers from God. I know now that not one thing happens to me without my Father allowing it. It will always be for my good, because my Father is good. He is always in control and our enemy is but only His errand boy. Not to be trivialized as mere minions by us. However they are all at His command. There has been much speculation and many theories about why Job had to go through what he did, but let us stay with the most important question? Why did God allow it and why to such an extent? He allows these circumstances because not only does He know the future, but He knows what we need to learn and what we need to let go of. Initially, His focus will first be to heal us. He knows that life has given us some serious blows that makes it very difficult to walk in obedience. And during this season of restoration and healing He will start to teach us slowly to renew our minds

and begin to walk in obedience. The requirements will become greater and so also our dependency. His ultimate goal is holiness. He is the Alpha and Omega that is preparing us for eternity. Preparing us for His glory. That through our lives He may be glorified over all the earth. Not us, but Him. As we mature in the Lord, it is no longer about whether we have money in the bank, clothes to wear or a job. The things of the world become of so little importance. Our eyes will be singularly focused only on how our lives can give Him glory. Whether in joy or pain, peace or suffering. We will become indifferent to the circumstances and wholly given to His purposes. It often takes terrible things to happen to us before we realize just how much we hold onto them or how much our thinking still has to change. He allows these difficult circumstances to teach us His ways. Out of our own we will not seek out that which brings out the worst in us. But that is exactly what He wants to do. Bring out the worst in us so that it can stay out of us. He needs to bring it into the light so that we can deal with it. In the end we have the ultimate gift. The gift of being in control of our souls. Which is not to be controlled by our emotions and traditions and old ways. To be able to say like Habakkuk, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord!

You have a choice. Would you rather have your circumstances improved so that you can be happy, or your circumstances stay the same or even digress so that you may be brought to a place of joy in the Lord? Happiness versus His joy? The joy of the Lord is our strength. However, the world is “In pursuit of Happiness”. The one is eternal, whilst the other is temporary. For His joy in our circumstances is the expression of the overcoming power of God. The expression of an intimate relationship with God. Living epistles, witnesses to the saving grace of the gospel.

What will you allow Him to do? How far are you willing to go with God? Have you set the boundaries? Are you happy with living the mundane life of going to work, home and to church and do it all over again, but not experience His true intention for the Church, which is GLORY? Or are you willing for anything that comes from His hand and interpreting your circumstances through the eyes of the Holy Spirit? As coming from God and not from man? No complaining, no murmuring. Not that we should not ask for prayer, but has your prayer become your murmuring? These are tough questions, especially if you have gone through some very painful experiences and find yourself seeing God as cruel at times. Which will ultimately erode your trust in Him. If all you see is how God does nothing to change this evil world, or to help the broken and destitute, it is only an indication that you first of all do not truly know Him, and also that you demand that He does things on your terms and timing. He did not say He will not do anything about it, He has His time for everything. But we will be held accountable for not obeying Him

and rebelling against His ways, which is the reason for why the world looks like it does. At least your own life. Your own justifications often speak of the pride in your heart, unwilling to bow before the Creator of all things. We have no excuse or justification within ourselves.

If we choose life then that is exactly what He will give. Resurrection life. He has promised that He works all things together for good for those who love Him and who are called by His name (Romans 8: 28 KJV). This is not a principle, it is life!

2.

The Way of The Cross

God has chosen one thing to discipline us, and only that one thing. The Cross. Paul said, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2: 2 KJV). Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam. 15: 23 KJV). In fact, the whole inception of evil comes from pride, which created a revolution in heaven. This revolution brought a rebellion that resulted in Lucifer and his angels being thrown out of heaven. The enemy has still not stopped with his rebellion and is working in the hearts of man. Unless you see the importance of two kingdoms that are at the heart of life and death, you are not living in reality. It is either about God’s Kingdom or satan’s kingdom. There is no middle ground. You cannot think that when you stand with your little toe in the kingdom of satan and the rest of you in the Kingdom of God that majority rules. No. We have to see this from a spiritual perspective. Whatever area we compromise in, is ground given to the kingdom of satan. God requires ultimate obedience. Totality. Any disobedience is rebellion, even partial obedience. God takes rebellion very seriously. He sees this as witchcraft. You may say, “Surely my disobedience is not witchcraft?” But God’s ways are not our ways. He does not weigh with the same scale we do. This requirement is way beyond our means. But He has made a way. Our response should be of one who is under new ownership. Hearts willing to be laid bare before Him as He shows us the areas that we either need to let go of or need to repent of. For how can we call Him Lord of our lives when in fact we choose the areas we think He may rule? He is either Lord of all or not Lord at all. The old man has died with Christ on the cross and we are no longer under the law but under grace (Romans 6: 14 KJV). Our relationship with Him is one of worship and obedience, which is the very evidence of our love for Him. Everything we do in our lives is an act of worship. Not sentimental love, for true love is obedience in all circumstances. Jesus said in John 15 that if we love Him we will do His commandments and we will abide in His love. This kind of love is backed up by works of loving obedience. All of us first clean a cup before we fill it and make good use of it. Why do we expect anything different from our Heavenly Father? He wants to use us, but He has to sanctify us, which is to set us apart. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He before ordained that we might walk in them (Ephesians 2: 6 – 10 KJV). When someone purifies gold, it is done by heating the gold to such a degree that all of the dross and impurities rise to the surface. Patiently he waits for this one thing as he looks into the gold. He is waiting for his

reflection. Even so our Father, to whom we are His workmanship, watches jealously over us, until His Son is fully formed in us and He sees Jesus in us. This is the heart's cry of Paul in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

Our Father watches over us with patience and meticulously takes care of every detail. He is longsuffering and perfect in all His ways. When He looks at us, He sees the work He has done in us. Not just what He preordained, but the fulfilment of it in our lives as we trust Him day by day, of which He is the Author and Finisher. He has made all things beautiful in His time (Ecclesiastes 3:11 KJV). Can you see Him looking at you right this moment in anticipation as He works in you? We will not be able to be His disciples, (the root word of discipline) unless the cross is applied to our lives. He has to deal with every area and burn away all the wrong thinking and dependence we have in those areas in order for us to walk as He has walked. The cross will always be central to all that God is doing and it must be central to ours as well.

The cross is the climax of all things past, present and future. It is the full expression of who God is and who we are in Him. It cannot be a means to an end. We stray from the authenticity of the gospel when we stray from the true message of the cross.

In *The Cruciality of the Cross*, P. T. Forsyth writes, "A true grasp of the atonement not only meets many positive features of the present age, but above all it meets the age in its need and impotence, its need of a centre, of an authority, of a creative source, a guiding line, and a final goal."

The cross is where He transforms us. This transformation comes in the same way His transformation took place. From death unto life. As a young boy, Jesus submitted to authority. He submitted to His parents even though He knew that He was sent from heaven. He grew in maturity through submission to authority, therefore becoming disciplined. This is the life of a son. Just like you and me, He had to die daily and be obedient. But we are unable to die to self. We will do our best to die to self, only to find ourselves failing over and over again. We might think we are not trying to die in our own strength. But there is a thin line between walking by faith and doing something in your own strength. Just because you are doing something out of the right motive and it is doctrinally sound, does not mean it is done by faith. Only He can reveal to you from which source you are living. From the flesh or from the Spirit. And He causes us to fail miserably, even after we have done everything He has asked. We go to courses, we pray vigilantly and warfare, but still we fail miserably at dying to self. We cry out to Him feeling abandoned and alone. The reality is that no one can crucify himself. It is at the foot of the cross where even this

reality has to hit home, where we see that all our spiritual efforts are like filthy rags. It is a stripping and an unveiling of the true self, where all that is left is only empty hands in complete dependency. We can only lie before the cross in true repentance, but it is the Holy Spirit that does the crucifying at that moment. At that very moment the kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies. This kernel of wheat, this life, dies to all so that Christ may be your all in all. Many refer to this as “The Dark Night of the Soul”. The Dark Night of the Soul is a book written many years ago by St John of the Cross about this actual spiritual dying. This is when the seed of faith will start to germinate in the dark soil. From this very dark place we start to slowly walk by faith in the fear of God because we no longer lean on the arm of the flesh. This is where the will has been brought into complete submission by the Spirit and absolute surrender. We then live by what He has done, and not by what we need to do or think we have done. You are brought to a place of complete and utter nothingness. This is why Paul said, I am nothing. In essence this is where we are brought to. We will often think we have come to the end of ourselves, but only God knows when we have reached that place of complete and utter surrender. To be utterly dependent on the Spirit within you and to submit and do His promptings by faith is the life of discipline. This is why Jesus said that He will liken the man that builds his house upon the rock, whose house did not fall, to those who hear His Word and DO them.

Many people will see this as salvation through works, where in fact it is actually the obedience required after salvation. 2 Peter 1: 10 says, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail.” And Philippians 2:12 says” Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Your being, which is to say your thinking, speaking and hearing, all that constitute you, has to come from a basis of faith. The Word states, whatever is not of faith, is sin (Romans 14: 23 KJV). This is what it means to walk by the Spirit. We might be able to quote different verses, but do we truly believe it? We will be amazed how much we lean on the flesh in order to do that which is spiritual. Art Katz said, “Just because you can phrase something verbally does not mean you have the corresponding reality. Unless the spirit speaking is in agreement with the speaking, it is a lie, it is only a truth in part.” Has this revelation truly hit home? God has to show us the areas where we are living a lie. He has to lead us in various ways to experience our utter weakness and sinfulness that we too with Paul will cry out that we know that in our flesh no good thing dwells. This is exactly where He wants to get us. A place of such a clear vision and understanding that we can do nothing without Him (John 15 KJV). Not just of how weak we are, but actually how

sinful we are as well. Unfortunately, some take longer than others to see the significance of their failures in the light of what Father is teaching them, and very often we have to learn the same lesson over and over again. He has to bring us to the end of our own works, to take up His works. This is what the Word means when saying we can now enter into His rest. To enter into His rest is to walk by faith. In Hebrews 4 we read that they ceased from their own works and entered by faith into His rest. The biggest struggle for us is to stop from religious works. I myself can testify that it took me many years to learn the reality of how I tried to save myself. This truth takes very long to sink in when you are desperately trying to live a holy life. This is because you think you are in God's will and "oh so spiritual". It is a juxtaposition between faith and doing. All of your doing must be by faith, but that faith is birthed out of death, which is at the cross. The reality of your own weakness in the light of His all sufficiency. In the light of what He has done. Not just your salvation, but His sufficiency for your every need. No one can teach you this. Only He can. And there is only one place where He will teach you this, the cross. He shows us our true motives, our pride, our selfishness and more. He intensifies the heat of the fire to burn away the dross so that He eventually sees His image in us. Only then does He equip us for our purpose in life. Many of us mistake the sanctification as the equipping, but it is actually the cleansing and the setting apart of the vessel. The equipping comes once the character has been formed. God is faithful and merciful to use us even in our immaturity at times. This does not mean the person is perfect and never sins after sanctification. It does mean that the vessel's character has been forged to sustain the persecution that will come once God starts to truly use them. These saints have gone through immense suffering, in order to prepare them to bear the suffering and persecution that will follow. For the moment that you have died to self and no longer seek your own kingdom, but His, is the moment that you have become a target for the enemy of His Kingdom. This is where resurrection life is essential. With His character comes His anointing, power and authority. His strength is made perfect in our weakness, but only in obedience. This is very similar to the growing stages of a child from crawling to walking and running, to that of maturity. And God has never been in a hurry. It is a learning process of gradual maturity from childhood into sonship. This is why the creation is waiting for the adoption of the sons and daughters of God, and not the children of God. There is a big difference between a child of God and a son of God. Sonship speaks of maturity. We know that maturity has nothing to do with age, but rather with character. This is also where the cross no longer is just a symbol of dying to self, but the very power of God to save the lost! To be a son speaks of representation and government, whereas a child is restricted and still has to be fed the elementary of the Kingdom of God.

For everything there is a season and a time (Ecclesiastes 3:11 KJV). His promise to us has always been that He will prune us so that we may bear fruit, and fruit in abundance. This glorifies the Father when we bear fruit. It also speaks of a process that is ongoing. The pruning is a necessary process of discipline. Paul clearly states that if we are not disciplined we are illegitimate and not true children of God (Hebrews 12: 8 KJV). Acts 5 says that the Holy Spirit is given to them that obeys Him. Many ask to be filled with the Spirit or desire a fresh touch from God, but how is their obedience to the Spirit? There has to be a willingness and a desire to recognise opportunities of obedience, which one welcomes in order to become a true son. This is when you choose to be sensitive to your Lord, your new owner who has bought you with His blood. We can look at the pruning as the cutting off, but sometimes a branch has to be tied in such a way that it bends in order to grow a certain direction. That is the discipline. Pruning stimulates growth, but discipline brings direction. There comes a time in our walk with God where we are no longer satisfied with the crumbs. We want the real thing and we do not want to see it just displayed in others, but in us. We want God to use us and we want to be done with sin. This is authenticity. Once we have committed to this kind of Christianity we commit to the way of the cross. In effect you are committing to dying. Not to salvation, that is just the beginning, but to dying. The way of the cross is not a sentimental feeling or romantic illusion, nor is it something we hang around our necks. It is reality! The way of the cross is death. It is the only true authentic way of saying it and anyone who has been on this very narrow way of the cross will testify to this. This is an obedience that takes pre-eminence over dreams, aspirations, traditions, culture, family and friends. This is where you tell God that you are willing to lay all aside and leave all behind to follow Him. Obedience unto the Lord is an obedience unto death. There can be no resurrection life without the cross.

God uses the cross to cause us to die to self, so that we may walk in obedience to Him in faith. Each obedience requires the Holy Spirit whilst at the same time we become like Him.

Embracing your cross is not an option. It is the only option.

3.

Virtue

Virtue is what proceeds from Him to us. Another meaning of virtue is moral excellence. This is the vehicle of God's power. When the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus' garment, the Word says that virtue left Him. This by itself would imply that He obtained virtue in order for it to be able to leave Him. He lived a life of obedience upon obedience, and this creates moral character, which is virtue.

Luke 2:52 King James Version (KJV)

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Increasing in something means that you start at one degree or level and grow to another. One would think it would say power left Him. All righteous power stems from virtue. This is why the demons cried out to the vagabond Jews trying to drive them out in the Name of Jesus, "Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you?" Once again, it is the Christ in us that they see and recognise, which is the true authority.

There is a power which is divorced from character, often in religious circles, even in charismatic churches. Everybody wants to be used by God. Statements like God has chosen you or He has called you for great things are proclaimed from the pulpit or books. We hear of the gifts of the Spirit and talents He has given us and how He wants to mightily use us, but the question remains what kind of character backs up the sustaining and expression of these callings and gifts of God? And can we truly with clarity say that these are authentic or real gifts? How do we know the true from the false? We have to have substance.

In Acts 3:12 we read what Peter said to those who held unto him and John, after they healed the lame man, "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"

Peter is saying here that it is not them, but Him in them. His power and His holiness that has healed this man. We have to allow Him to clean us thoroughly so that He may live through us, so that His power and His holiness is displayed through us. We cannot be pretty little crystal balls that are beautiful on the outside, but hollow on the inside. We have to be a people forged through

a history with God where our identity is not built on the gifts of the Spirit or our talents, but God Himself. It is not that it is not true that God wants to use us, but sadly how many people hear this year in and year out, and the Church has still not made a significant difference in our generation! Just think of the stadiums of people and mega churches that hear these kinds of messages, and yet there is no significant change in their local areas. It is not that they do not have these gifts, granted there are many counterfeits, but why do we not see the power? How often do we participate in Church just because everybody else does? How set are we in the traditions of men? Do we really understand why we do certain things in church, and do we do it anyway even if we do not understand? Do we even understand the significance of communion? What is true worship? The world sees us as flaky and puffed up with our great big shows, but they know the real thing when they see it. We may be doing all the right things, but are we doing it out of tradition or out of relationship? These practices are dead without the Spirit. They will only be life unto us if we have understanding and respect for it in its proper place. Worship will not be something we do in church, but a way of life. If there is a corresponding reality within ourselves, we will not look upon communion as something we take once a month at church, but it will be life for us in our daily living. When Paul spoke to the Greek philosophers in Ephesus, proclaiming to them who their "Unknown God " is, it says that some left their idols and gave unto him (Acts 17:34 KJV). We must not hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1: 18 KJV). For religiosity is the spirit of death, but humble obedience, which is a relationship in Christ, is the Spirit of life. How many people are spiritually dead or asleep in their traditions? I am not only referring to those who are active at churches, but also those who sit at home, reading their bible and saying a prayer every morning, but there is no life! And strangely they think because they are not actually involved in deliberate sin, everything is okay. But there is no life! Jesus called the Pharisees white washed tombs. They were clean on the outside and held fast to their traditions, but they were void of characters forged by a relationship with the Living God. Dead on the inside. They knew about the Living God, but did not know the Living God. Watchman Nee in his booklet, The Holy Spirit and Reality, speaks of how two people are able to say the same thing, but the one has no impact and the other does. This is because they have touched the heart of an issue, not just through understanding, but by revelation and by living it. Virtue is what leaves us, from out of a life of obedience, unto those who believe. Our words will not just be words, but virtue will be the power behind it. It will be life to those who believe. Authenticity will always carry with it the weight of true authority and anointing, which is virtue. Virtue is not just to be someone with integrity. Virtue is like Wisdom. It is part of the essence of God. It is moral excellence.

4.

God Is Humble

Philippians 2:7 says” But He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.” In the same way, we are to leave behind our own strengths, especially our spiritual strengths, which we have come to depend upon. For many their identity is in their talents or gifts or the position they hold, instead of Christ Himself. They will say that this is not true in their case, but this is true of all of us, until God deals with us in these areas. Nobody is exempt from this reality. What and who would they be without their gifts? We may be able to fool others, but not God. He knows how important we esteem our talents and our gifts of the Spirit. Humility is of far greater value to Him than the gifts of the Spirit, because one can have all the gifts of the Spirit and be full of pride. Humility forms the bedrock of true Christlikeness. We become confident in the gifts He gives us. Without knowing, we slip into the role of self-confidence where in fact our confidence must only be found in Him. David says in Psalm 34: 1, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.” This change is very subtle because it is very easy to step into a kind of “I know now how to do this” attitude. We find others approving of us or esteeming us for the gifts that God gave or the ministry, and before we know it, we do not know who we are without it. Meekness is the essential requirement to be taught by Him. As in Psalm 25: 9 the meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek He will teach His way. Just like at the heart of rebellion is pride, so at the heart of discipline is humility. Jesus was a servant. He came to reveal the Father to us. Nothing more profoundly states that God is humble by two facts in the Word. The first is, He became a helpless baby, born not in a palace befitting God, but in a crib, from the womb of a virgin girl in Bethlehem. God Almighty became a baby. This is too great to take in. Even Nazareth was considered the lowest. Nathaniel said, “Can anything good come from out of Nazareth?” Jesus the eternal Son of God came down to show us what it is to be a son of God. A SON of God. The weight of it we cannot know for we will have to be with the Father and the Son before the beginning of time, before creation. We will have to be able to experience the communion between the Father and the Son to know the weight and magnitude of what Jesus had left behind in His obedience to the Father. He says in John 10 that the Father has given Him this commandment.

John 10:17-18 (KJV)

¹⁷ Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

¹⁸ No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

We have to consider what He was willing to do and give up to show us the Father. As well as His love for us in order to restore communion between the Father and mankind. He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth. Even before He was born, He demonstrated to us the cost of discipleship.

The second act is Jesus washing His disciple's feet. The lowly servants at that time were responsible to wash the feet of the guests. Feet that have walked throughout the day on dusty and dirty roads. But Jesus took a robe and basin and washed His disciple's feet. None of the disciples thought to do so, but He did. If this is not a clear statement of the humility of God then I do not know what is! Jesus did not only wash Peter's feet, but He washed Judas' feet. The one He knew would betray Him. It says in John 13 that when Judas left to betray Him, Jesus said, NOW the Son is glorified and the Father in Him. What? How is He glorified by Judas' betrayal? Therein lies the heart of who He is. A lamb that would be brought to the slaughter, but silent. Humble before His accusers and those who betrayed Him. Our Father is glorified in us, even when we are betrayed. The reason is that through this death, resurrection life can come. He is our defence. This is why the Father could say at Jesus' baptism, "This is My only begotten Son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus had no need for baptism, because He was sinless. But He did it so that the will of the Father would be fulfilled. And from out of His obedience came the Father's approval. These are the same words we want to hear when we stand before Him, "Well done faithful servant." Faithfulness is obedience.

Living in submission to His earthly father and mother, obeying them, seeking to serve them in the smallest things in honouring them as the commandment required, made Him the servant He was at that moment. He was always the sum of all His moments in any given time. Out of many obediences He could show us the heart of the Father, saying: "This is who My Father is." Jesus stripped Himself not only of His divinity in heaven, but He walked in humility serving others around Him continually. A great leader is a servant-leader. Before anyone can become a leader, they have to learn humility and to serve. Not just God, but man. I am saddened how this statement has been coined to fit the narrative of leadership in the workplace. It has become a business quote as a means to an end, instead of the end in itself. It is still true for the workplace, but it should not be cheapened to only that sphere. Humility is how we live. It cannot be separated from love. We often think it is most important to serve God, but God has made it clear to us that whatever we do

to the least of these, we do unto Him. He wants us to know that the one is like unto the other. Serving an ungrateful and spoiled man is quite another thing. We can humble ourselves unto God, but when it comes to man our pride often gets the best of us. We hate unfairness, and detest it to be used and manipulated. We will forgive them this one time, but they better not do it again. Seventy times seventy, He said.

Humility does not ask who you serve, but why you serve. Is it to be seen by man or for approval? Humility is the essence of love and love considers others better than themselves.

Philippians 2:1-8 (KJV)

² If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

² Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

³ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus

Jesus demonstrated the humility by obeying His Father in stripping Himself of His divinity and coming down to earth. Then He demonstrated His humility further by serving man, even washing their feet.

Jesus was such a leader, the Good Shepherd that served His sheep continually. In the same way, every true act of obedience is preceded with a humble heart. It will never be to be acknowledged or to gain any honour, but only for the sake of obedience out of love. I was often confronted with whether a situation was unfair and whether it justified me to not serve others. But my mind had to change where I was going to make every moment an opportunity to serve. I wanted to seek out those moments. Just or unjust. If it was up to my feelings, I would never serve. But my emotions have to come into subjection to the Spirit and be controlled by the Spirit. It is not easy to serve those who demand it of you in very disrespectful ways. People who are ungrateful, hurtful or spitefully use you, and they know it. Will you serve someone if they demand it of you, even if they have no authority over you? Even insulting you whilst they demand it of you? Will you humble yourself and do it year in and year out, even if no one will ever know about it? If there is

nobody there to defend you? The motive will always be so that He would be glorified. Not to be seen as spiritual or even as humble. We have to be sensitive to our thoughts in these areas. When we catch ourselves thinking these thoughts of self-adoration, we need to seek why it is that we are seeking to steal His honour. This is spiritual pride. To Him be all the glory and all the honour, to Him alone.

Andrew Murray writes in his book, *Humility*:

“Humility must lead us to die to self. We have no other way to become real. It is the only way we can die to our fallen nature and be alive to God. Only through our own cross can we have Christ formed in us. Humility will be the air He breathes inside us. Humility will be His joy.”

Humility will always be the starting point to whether we will obey or not. Whatever we go through, we have to remember that Father has allowed it. If it is verbal abuse and anger, the price one will have to pay is to be silent and deal with your own anger. We have to choose between our feelings to retaliate and set things right, or to humble ourselves under His hand. This is no easy task. We sometimes feel that we are pushed beyond our limit and reach a point of retaliating out of so much pent up anger and hurt. And before we know it the same old horrible words are spewed out of our mouths. Over and over the lesson has to be learned until we hate the sin so much that we would rather die than do it again. We have to hate sin! It requires a constant vigilance and the attack usually comes when we least expect it, not prepared mentally or spiritually at all. But every time, just as our emotions start to rise, the Spirit will speak to our conscience to make a choice right there to humble ourselves. Usually it is to keep silent. Sometimes we are not considered or even treated as the lackey for years. Ungratefulness, unloving and harsh conditions becomes the very grinding stone to bring our hard heart to dust. Here we face the hard reality of our self-pity.

Our resistance to humble ourselves in these situations or our ignorance in what He through His Spirit is teaching us, causes us to have to learn these lessons over and over. We tend to stay too long in the desert of our lives because of disobedience. And there is also the fact that very often we may be learning something from a different perspective or on a deeper level. The higher the trees, the deeper the roots. Deeper and deeper we are to grow into the soil of humility. In all your dying, your one responsibility is to humble yourself. In every situation I faced myself, I was immediately confronted with a choice. Will I be doing things as I always have been, or will I choose to humble myself? Every time I chose to keep quiet and not retaliate was a death to me. And that death was very real. Everything in me wanted to do the opposite and strike back. Everything in me wanted justice for what was done unto me. To set the record straight. But in

those moments of dying, I chose to fall to the ground with one aim before me. There were many times that I literally fell to the ground. I wanted to die. I knew that my biggest problem was not those of my own household, or those around me, but it was me. Even if they were unfair or unjust. I knew that the possibility of them ever changing was slim to nothing. I knew that it was no longer what they did to me, but my response to what they did. That left only me. I could only change me. I had to embrace that fact to its uttermost. Unless I did, I would always look to them to change. But as I humbled myself over and over again, with His promise of lifting me up, I found myself exercising a muscle of self-control I never had. It was touch and go most of the time, but gradually after many times of failing miserably, momentum was reached. I found that in circumstances where I normally would have gone crazy, I now remained calm and collective. Almost as if I was watching the whole thing from another person's perspective. The absence of emotions running high, has caused me to be able to really see the heart of an issue. From out of that perspective I could make sound decisions. These very circumstances were divinely allowed by my Father to teach me and to discipline me. I had to make a choice each and every single time to submit to it. It was never easy. It was downright horrible and I often found myself crying on the bathroom floor over the injustice in my life and my inability to accomplish what He was asking of me. Never once did He say, "Now I am really disappointed in you! You should know better." But rather, each time of repenting and picking myself up from the floor, He would strengthen me and show me where I went wrong, or what I was holding onto that I needed to let go of. Multiple times a day, even well into the night, I was confronted with having to make a choice to humble myself. I hated getting up in the morning. I knew what it meant. And I knew very well that I had nothing in myself that could rescue me from myself, except to die to self. There was only one option, the cross. Year in and year out I was facing the real me. The more I committed to His way and His dealings in me, the more I came face to face with who I truly am. Not just my own hypocrisy, but my utter weakness. Time and time again I failed miserably. It felt as if it would never stop. Deeper and deeper I was drowning in the sea of life that was nothing short from a tsunami upon tsunami. The waves just got bigger and I was going down. Never did it occur to me that He wanted me to embrace my weakness. I was trying so hard to stay afloat, grabbing the nearest stick in the waves that would happen to float by. They came in different forms. Some were called medication, others therapy, some spiritual declarations, or using your authority. They all sounded so great, but none of these were helping me to die to self. They were externally focussed without dealing with the heart of the matter, which was me. All were formulated from the world and the views of others on how to stay afloat in stormy seas. But there was a day, when I embraced my utter weakness. I cannot tell you how often I thought, "This is it! I'm dead." But low and behold,

the next day there would be a resurrection party. The old man staring back at me in the mirror. Was I ever going to get rid of her? But I decided that I was not going to give up. I eventually reached a point of understanding that only He knows when I am done. If anything, I was determined to see it through, no matter how long it was going to take. Only He knows when I have truly come to the end of myself. I also noticed in this season how more dependent I became on Him in absolutely everything, as well as learning so many different things about Him, which I never would have. When you embrace your weakness, you fall upon the Rock. He is the Rock that can withstand any storm. In your moment of humbling yourself, you are embracing your weakness. It is a literal dying. That sinful nature in us remains on that cross, never to throw a resurrection party again. It dies. Yes, there are times when we fail and we sin in small areas, but these become less and less until there is no real struggle with sin. Can you believe that? If someone had to tell me that many years ago, I would have told them they are dreaming. But it is true. It is called the rest of God. It is where faith begins to rise. Resurrection faith. Not faith in a method or faith in a verse or faith in a course, but faith in Him. No dependency on the flesh, but complete and utter dependence on Him. It is absolute surrender. Absolute surrender in every area of our lives. Whenever that feeling of the loss of control threatens your sense of peace, you can know that you have an area in your life that needs to be surrendered in humility. To be sacrificed unto Him. You cannot take a sacrifice back. It is ultimate. And so moment by moment, one scenario after another is the grinding of our souls into submission and humility unto a God that requires all. I call it ruthless love. Often we place something on the altar only to realize that we have taken it back without knowing. That simply means that we have not given it in its entirety. Sometimes we need to understand or learn something new in the same area. It will remain as long as He wants it to be, until we have learned all we needed to.

Not one area in your life will be untouched by His Spirit. This dying to self, which is the humbling of the soul is the consecration of every area of your life to be given to Him. Once the consecration is completed the sanctification has been accomplished. We are sanctified in Christ Jesus, but we are also being sanctified. The reality of the sanctification has to be accomplished in us and cannot just be a title. This is often a very lonely walk and A W Tozer wrote a whole sermon on this walk called, "The saint must walk alone". All great saints of God walked lonely lives, not just in their growing into maturity, but even in ministry. They are called out, not to go in again, but they become sojourners and loners that just cannot fit into the mould of this world anymore. This whole world is predicated on the basis of humanism. What man has accomplished and can accomplish still. Its whole premise is "do what thou wilt" and have no need of God and those who are not

meeting up to their standards are weaklings. This world is in enmity with God. Do not be fooled. Where man celebrates strength, God celebrates that which is weak. Even your nice unsaved neighbour, still has the spirit of this world in him, which is in enmity with God.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 King James Version (KJV)

²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are:

²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.

We have to choose to humble ourselves before any decision is made. This will determine whether we will bow in submission or rise up in pride unto rebellion. Once again, we need to remember that just as salvation is only the beginning, sanctification through humility is the means to the end. And that end is the incarnation of Christ in you.

5.

God is Speaking

God is always with us, ever present. Hence the importance of acknowledging Him in all our ways. But do we? Do we stop to think and ask that He would have His way in the menial and grand, in the ordinary and glorious? Do we not see that it is He who makes our menial grand and glorious? He is our All in All. When we give Him our two fishes and fives loaves He feeds thousands, and when we give Him our mustard seeds, He moves mountains. But we do not want to bother Him with the things we can do. We will only go to Him with that which is impossible. However, He did say that without Him we can do nothing. Nada! And yet, day by day and year after year, we do so much without Him and do not have an inkling of an idea of what it means to be in His rest in ALL things. We often mistake this rest for the peaceful feeling we have during our quiet time. But He is our rest in all circumstances, especially when we are not in control. He MUST have our ear at all times.

I remember picking up a baby bird that fell from its nest from a tree. I could not find that nest anywhere! I knew that there was no way that I would be able to place it back in its nest. This bird was so small! Its eyes were still closed and it had no feathers. I would not have been able to feed it. It desperately needed its mother. Sadly this bird was as good as dead. Overcome with sadness I asked Father why this happened. He told me that what He is doing within me is the same as that baby bird. He wants me as dependent on Him as that baby bird on its mother, but also the process is that of being as good as dead. I think at that moment it hit me so hard, because of the impact this baby bird had on me when I picked it up that day. The vulnerability, the weakness and the pathetic nature was so evident. That dead Lord? To that extent? Can it be that we are to be so hopelessly dependent on Him? We can only reach such a point when we embrace our true weakness in all things. I knew the cat would kill it, so would my German shepherd. I had two different occasions after that incident where there were dead birds in my house. The cat dragged one in, proudly displaying her catch and one of my budgies just killed over. This was in a season of great trials and sorrow in my life in which Father used it to bring me to the end of all my self-effort and enter into His rest. The number 8 has great significance to me as well. My birthday is on the 8th of April, my ring has 8 diamonds, we got engaged after 8 months of dating and we got married on the 8th of July. My daughter's birthday is on the 8th of February. Now none of these things were planned by me. But I could clearly see a picture after a while. The point I am trying

to make is this. Father is constantly talking to us through various means. Predominantly He should be speaking to us through His Word and not just through dreams, visions or signs. Everything has to be confirmed in the Word. God is faithful to do this if we seek Him. For me this makes being a child of God very exciting! Of course Father wants us to use discernment and not read something into every little thing. This colour means this and this animal means that! It becomes like children lying on the grass, each one having their own interpretation about the cloud formation. We do not have to make it up. He will guide us and show us and it will be consistent with His will and His Word. Only we must have the discipline to turn around and look as Moses did at the burning bush. We also should not be so strict as to say that God only speaks to us through His word and never through natural occurrences, numbers, visions or dreams. The whole of the Bible is stacked full of numbers and even has a book called Numbers. There is a great danger in interpretation of dreams and visions books because of the inconsistency between them. Which interpretation do you believe? If God gave it to you, you are to seek Him for the interpretation, not man. I have come to learn that He knows our natural and unnatural bend and knows best how to speak to us. He really does not have to speak to me with dreams and visions, His Word is sufficient. But, He chooses to speak to me this way too. I am very creative by nature and dreams would get my attention. However, I do not consider this as a feather in my cap. When Miriam and Aaron came to Moses saying that they were just as good as him, God's reply was that to them He spoke in dreams and visions, but with Moses face to face. However, God did say that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit and that there would be dreams and visions. I would not be too quick to pass judgment on how God chooses to speak to His children. The most important part is that it must be confirmed in the Word of God. It will also stay either true to what God is presently busy with in your life, or something future that is true to His character. So nothing is insignificant because God is always speaking. We have to hear His voice in order to obey Him.

In order for us to grow in discipline, we need to be able to recognise the way God speaks to us personally as well. Just like when a parent sets clear boundaries to a child, so God at first sets very clear boundaries for us, as His children. But He requires us to grow to maturity. Every relationship has a certain dynamic, a certain understanding that has developed through good and bad times, through trials and blessings. A horse may mean something to you that speaks of strength and being a go getter. To another it may mean being led by God. He wants to speak to you personally. We do not serve a cookie cutter God. No matter the way He chooses to speak to us, it will always be congruent with His Word. Eventually our relationship with Father develops to the extent that He really does not need to set such clear boundaries, because we know intuitively what pleases the

Father. The voice we once so clearly heard, now becomes softer and softer to the extent that we no longer have to ask Him whether something is His will. We develop an intuitive of His will in what we do. This intuition comes from a history with God where He has dealt with you on your journey in holiness, a reservoir of His Word in your spirit, and a life of discipline. Should He disagree in the way we go, only the softest nudging in our spirit by His Spirit draws us away. Only through a life of discipline to that still small voice. We will also be trained in spiritual discipline not to see anything as insignificant because everything in the Kingdom of God has eternal value.

Just this morning I read in my devotional, My Utmost for His Highest, June 3, "At first we want the awareness of being guided by God. But then as we grow spiritually, we live so fully aware of God that we do not even need to ask what His will is, because the thought of choosing another way will never occur to us. If we are saved and sanctified, God guides us by our everyday choices. He actually guides our common sense. And when we yield to His teachings and guidance, we no longer hinder His Spirit by continually asking, "Now Lord, what is Your will?" Psalm 32: 8 says, "I will guide and instruct you in the way that you should go. I will guide you with My eye upon you."

God is saying that you will grow so intimate with Him that you will know His will intuitively. This is only possible if we are immersed in His Word. Jesus prayed, Father make them one, as we are one. God guides us continually in various ways, but we must grow and mature in walking in obedience to the Word by the Spirit. Those who are carnally minded mind the things of the flesh, but they that are controlled by the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Romans 8: 6 - 10 KJV). The Lord said that He would send us His Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, and He will guide us into all truth (reality). 1 Corinthians 2 says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him, but we have the mind of Christ." Everything has the possible prospect to be used by God in context with what we are about at that moment.

We develop a certain private way of communication with Father that is unique to our relationship with Him. This too shows how intimate He is and desires to be with us. Knowing our desires, our struggles and that which is dear to us. All this is used to teach us further dependence on Him, but also to know His ways. What a privilege to know Him in this way. Even though there will always be a congruence with His Word and character, it will be uniquely tuned to our personality and our history with Him.

Eventually He wants us to be free from the need of having to have His felt presence, or speaking to us through dreams and visions. He wants us to walk in knowing that we are one with Him. This

is a maturity in sonship where your speaking and hearing is His speaking and hearing. Where there is no longer a distinction between what He says or you say. This is why Jesus could say with confidence to Philip, “When you see me, you see the Father. I and the Father are one.” (JOHN 14: 9 - 11 KJV)

6.

A Conscience Void of Offense

I was reading John 8 where the woman caught in adultery was brought in the midst of Jesus and her accusers. It says in verse 6 that He stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. This caught my eye. I am going to bet that at that very moment He was no longer listening to them, but to the only One that could give Him the wisdom He needed. He turned to this woman and said, “Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.

Before I go further explaining the rest of what was revealed to me in this chapter, we have to get some context, which is found way back in John 5. In verse 36 – 37 Jesus is telling the Pharisees that He does not receive testimony of man. This basically means that man is not the witness to what He says, but His Father. He does not seek the approval of man.

John 5:36-37 (KJV)

³⁶ But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

³⁷ And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

In verse 44 He asks, how can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

He was establishing the credibility of what He says and does. He is saying that God is a witness to all He says, because He only seeks the honour that comes from God.

In chapter 6 of the Book of John, Jesus says He is the bread of life that has come down from heaven. In verse 57, “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Keep in mind what He said in the previous chapter about only seeking the honour of God. This speaks of His motives about what and why whenever He spoke. Remember, every word counts.

This stands in conjunction with Jesus saying to Satan that man shall not live from bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Just before Jesus said He is the Bread of Life, He told them that he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwells in me, and I in him. What He is saying is that He desires that just as He lived from every word the Father spoke to Him, when we eat His word, we will live from every word He SPEAKS to us. He is the Word in us. It is not just about reading the Word, but rather the Word becomes the inner reservoir from where He speaks to us. We effectively live from the Word He speaks. The Word dwells in us. Jesus was well versed in the Torah, but He said, I only speak what the Father tells me to speak. He said the words that He speaks is not His own, but Him who sent Him. In verse 63 He says, "It is the spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words that I SPEAK unto you, THEY are spirit and THEY are life."

As important as it is for us to know the Word, just as important is it to learn to recognise His voice. Because we will live from every word that He SPEAKS. Can you understand why it is vital that we learn to have an ear that hears in the Spirit? Equally vital to have hearts free of filters in order to hear correctly.

In verse 68 Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. He desires that we shall learn to live from His eternal words of life!

In verse 45 it reads: It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.

In Chapter 7 Jesus was once again challenged by the Jews and He says in verse 15:

John 7:16-18 (KJV)

¹⁶ Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

¹⁷ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

¹⁸ He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory: but he that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Here we read again how Jesus is saying that He does not speak His own words. Therefore, the words He speaks are the Father's'. Also, because He seeks the glory of the Father, He is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him. No guile, no hidden motives, no seeking honour of man. Only seeking the glory of the Father.

Going back to the adulterous woman that stood in the midst of them we find the following. She had men accusing her before her and she had God (Jesus) before her. After Jesus dealt with her accusers, He asked her where they were and she said that no man is accusing her. And He said, neither do I. In Acts we read the following:

Acts 24:16 (KJV)

¹⁶ And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men.

In that very moment this woman was standing with a conscience void to offence toward God (Jesus) and toward men (They all threw down their stones).

In the same way Jesus, as the Son of God and the Son of Man stands with a conscience void to offence toward God and man.

Luke 2:52 King James Version (KJV)

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

This is where He wants us to be. The Bride is to be void of a conscience to offence toward God and man. In Hebrews we read the following:

Hebrews 12:14-15 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁴ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

¹⁵ Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

This is the reason why He said that He does not judge her. One would think if anybody could judge her, it would be Him. However, He was in effect saying that it is not Him that judges, but God, who is His witness. Why is this important? Because, every word that He spoke, was the words of the Father and those very words will judge the world. In the same way, when we live from every word that He speaks to us, we can, when we have a conscience void of offence toward God and man, know that the words we speak are Jesus' words. Those words will condemn those we speak to. However at the same time we will be held accountable for the words we speak. In the same way that the Father is the witness to His words and bears testimony, in the same way Jesus bears witness and testimony to our words because it is His words. In verse 50 He says, "And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judge."

The importance of us having a conscience without offence toward God and man cannot be overstated. If we harbour unforgiveness or any sin, we have to realize that this is an offence toward

God and those to whom we stand in unforgiveness leaves us in offense unto man. Jesus said in verse 34, Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin.

We are able to speak what He says to us by having three things firmly established. There has to be an inner reservoir of His Word in us by which we have the Word in us as an inner witness. Then, if we have a clear conscience before God, we have Him as our second witness. This only if we are not standing with a conscience that is offending toward man. We have to live in peace with all men. It does not mean that all men agree with us, but there are no ill feelings towards anybody. Not even secretly.

In John 12 we read the following:

John 12:47-50 (KJV)

⁴⁷ And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

⁴⁸ He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

⁴⁹ For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Why am I saying this? Firstly, the Lord requires us to be able to discern or judge righteously, but He also requires us to know what we need to speak in a given time. So many of us are scared that we speak out of our own imagination or are being presumptuous. But if we live a holy life and have a clear conscience with an inner reservoir of His Word, we can have boldness to speak the way He leads us, by faith. We can know that the Word in us and Jesus are our two witnesses to our speaking. We live by what He speaks to us. This is a scary prospect, but in reality it is nothing different than what Jesus had to do as the Son of Man and the patterned Son. We are to walk as He walked. Not only did He walk by faith, but He lived by the Father and every word the Father spoke to Him. Only as we discipline ourselves in every area of our lives, without exception, can we walk in authentic authority as He did. A living relationship is the wonder of our God that makes Him the only living God whom we serve. Not made by hands, but the self-existing God, who desires that His people would seek His face and know Him. What a privilege! Disciplining

ourselves in the area of our relationship towards God and man is vital to our hearing His voice. Because He desires that we will live, just like Him, from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

7.

Faith Can Wait

Discipline is the obedience to the call and guidance of the Holy Spirit on a moment to moment basis. Not only in what to do, but also in what not to do, or dare I say – to wait. Jesus had to wait for 4 days before He went to raise Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus was one of Jesus’ closest friends whom He loved very much. He was told by Father to wait. This could not have been easy for Him. Sometimes we have such romanticized ideas of how Jesus walked on the earth. It must have been an agonizing wait. The pressure from His disciples to act on behalf of His friend knowing that He surely wanted to go to His friend, or the people following Him, must have been huge. Not even mentioning the fact that He wanted to be with His friend in such a time of need. And yet He was obedient to the voice that said, “Wait”. And who is to say that the Father told Him for how long He must wait. We know that He waited for two days, but why do we assume that He was told to wait only two days? Our obedience is not only affecting us but those around us. Jesus had often said my time has not yet come, meaning there is a specific time when something had to be fulfilled. Not just prophecy, but in the lives of those around Him. God holds all the cards and our instructions come at the moment it is dealt by Him in His time. Not by our own perceptions or identification in a situation. Our emotions do not move us, only His Spirit. We would love to be warned before the time. But God is not moved by our schedule. Eternity is always at stake on a moment by moment basis, because we are now citizens of an eternal Kingdom. But do we live in such a fear that our choice to act or not to act affects eternity? Are we walking in the fear of God? Someone once said, “In all the manifold single events He never loses His outlook over the whole. In all the great events He never forgets the small matters, in the universal history, never the personal life story, in the course of centuries never the happenings of the seconds.” God is in control. He asks of us to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46: 10 KJV).

Since the Industrial Revolution there has been a huge growth in the development of mankind in every field. With that came the rapid growth of the technological age. We went from the Wright Brothers to drones, and from the first computers to robots. Knowledge has indeed accumulated, not just in volume, but in speed. It is to the point where the machine has taken over mankind. As disturbing as this sounds and is, somehow we adapted to this way of living. It is extremely fast paced and those who cannot keep up, is just simply left behind. However, from out of this age a generation has come with an inability to wait. Everything has to be fast and there is no longer an

appreciation for that which actually takes time. Most things have been replaced with technology to the point that people are living in a virtual reality. I cannot but think that this has robbed mankind of life. True life. That which can be appreciated from a viewpoint of substance, authenticity and character. That which had to be laboriously worked out to bring it to the masterpiece that it is. No appreciation for the journey and the suffering there of, but rather only interested in the bottom line or end product. These things are no longer important, but are rather seen as hindrances to growth.

But we serve the same God that told Moses to leave all behind, go up a mountain, and just be there. I have a suspicion that it was not just a day's journey. And he was also not told for how long he will have to just "be there". How do you just be? That is one of the most fundamental questions in a world where we are defined by what we do. We are no longer human-beings, but human-doings. Everything has to be done at a press of a button. But God will not be hastened by us and He is also not on our time schedule. If we want to know Him the way He truly wants to be known, it will have to be on His terms and waiting is always one of the requirements. We are often quoted that those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. This is true, but what does it mean to wait on the Lord? To not say one single word. To not feel the need to initiate a conversation or try to set a mood, but just simply be in the presence of the Self-existing God. The I AM, that I AM. It means simply that there is no self-initiation. All is directed by His Spirit for as long as He desires. Not to our end, but to His. For His glory alone. It means that when we come in His presence, we do not come so that we may be blessed or receive a word from Him or anything to our end. We come into His presence for His purpose. We do not come in with an agenda. We wait for the Spirit to move. And should He choose not to move, we remain waiting. For waiting in itself is the end. Waiting is worship. It serves as an expression of our submission to Him, especially now in the age we live in. His desire is that our waiting will not just be in our quiet times with Him in the morning, but that it will be our holy disposition and attitude of heart.

Waiting requires us to not only lay down our expectations, but to deal with that itch that so desperately wants to tell Him how we would like Him to deal with something. It requires us to deal with that immense out of control feeling that drives us up the wall. When all of the signs point to a major catastrophe about to happen. To not act out, even if you know what to do. To not jump to conclusions or be so quick to give your opinion. To wait on Him to clearly direct you and unless He does, you do not act at all. Waiting is one of the most important things He uses to teach us absolute dependence on Him, especially if we have the answer. The issue is not the answer, the issue is whether it is driven by our knowing, or His timing. God is outside of time. He

is never in a hurry. If He was in a hurry that would portray Him as out of control. But He is always in control. Never late. We can often not even drive somewhere without racing down the street. It is literally painful for us to drive the speed limit. So if this is the reality of who He is, why is it that we hit the inner panic button when we are late? Why is it that when we see the blow up we predicted, we fall to pieces? Instead of just simply waiting on Him knowing He is in control? Why do we have to act? Sometimes He does not want us to do anything. Just because you have an answer or can help someone, does not mean you are the chosen one. Can you bear it not be the one to help if you have the means to? What if your waiting is His divine will to install trust in you that even if things fall apart, He remains the same? He may want you to see how He will turn it around in His time. Jesus often said, “My hour has not come.”

I have realised that God has the whole puzzle and I but one puzzle piece out of a thousand pieces. I know only in part. His thoughts are not my thoughts and His ways are higher than my ways. I made peace with His sovereignty. Have you? If He can handle the universe, surely He can handle my problems? Once I made peace with His timing and the right He has to work in my life as He wills, I started to see my difficulties as divine appointments. It no longer had to happen in my time. I can wait. When your child is having trouble at school, can you bear allowing God to teach them instead of you? Can you bear seeing them suffer? Or when you know a friend is going through a difficult time. Do you ask Him whether she or he actually needs to go through this season? Or have you already decided on what you will do to alleviate your friend’s pain? When your friend is offended by others, are you choosing their side because you want to spare them the rejection? Do you wait to hear what Father is saying? Maybe He does not want to involve you and He wanted to use someone else? Maybe the lesson needs to be learned through a season of pain and suffering. We have to be willing to allow Him to do what He wants to do in every situation. In the same way we are now asking ourselves why the Lord allowed something to happen in our lives, we now have to ask the same question in other’s lives. Hebrews 11 gives us a list of these people who were willing to wait. It is known as the faith chapter.

In Hebrews 12: 13; 39 – 40 we read the following:

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

³⁹ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

⁴⁰ God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Faith can wait. Great faith can wait for years, even if it means to only obtain that which you are waiting for in heaven. Faith is a dependence on God's faithfulness to act according to His goodness. My daughter has a disorder that causes her to have almost no self-control. Very little is not done in exaggeration, including her anger. As a result she has lost all her friends. For years I prayed after exhausting all the ways I could think of to get her new friends, until one day I let go. It was agonizing to see my child experiencing so much rejection and loneliness, to the point where she did not want to live, day in and day out for years. And God did nothing. After many years of praying and doing what I could do with no success, I reached a point, knowing that He loves her far more than what I could ever. He was using this loneliness and desperation to draw her to Him. And I was praying for a friend, which would have meant that she would have looked to the friend, but not to Him. I chose to no longer pray about a friend. I chose to trust. Faith can wait, even for years. In the end she gave her heart to the Lord. If only we will let go, and "let God".

When we look at our circumstances from the point of view that God is never in a hurry and that He is always in control, then we enter into His rest by faith. It is the only way to enter into His rest. That includes waiting by faith. Not nervously pacing up and down and allowing our thoughts to run to and fro. But rather, with longsuffering and patience.

James says the following:

James 1: 2 – 8 (King James Version)

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.

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

What a glorious journey as I started to learn His paths of righteousness. His ways were indeed higher than mine, but that did not mean that He did not want to reveal them to me. He is so gracious and long-suffering with us. He is a wonderful loving Father who knows exactly how to form us, but we have to become like soft clay under His hands and allow Him to mould us. During this process we learn to obey Him one step at a time. We learn how He deals with His children and we gain wisdom and instruction not just through mere knowledge but by experience. Ephesians 3: 19 says “that you may know the love of Christ which passes knowledge...” God’s love is a life experience. It is tangible, real and true. He wants us to know Him, not in an instance, but on a journey with Him right through our lives and forever and ever, even if we have to wait in this life. Slowly as the reality of who we are opens up to us, we too slowly begin to see the reality of who He is, with unveiled faces.

8.

Discipline Is an Act of Love

Jesus said, “Let your light so shine that the world may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.” The world is waiting for the light of God to shine in the midst of a very dark age. What is your disobedience robbing the world of? What do you hold on to in your disobedience? Whether you like to know this or not, your disobedience is in a way a trade-off. You are holding onto something, but in the process forfeiting what He desires for you. What is the exchange and do you consider that this has eternal consequences and loss? We will all be held accountable for what we have done in our bodies, whether good or evil. One only has to look at the price Moses paid for his disobedience. He was denied entrance into Canaan and could only see it from afar. Can you imagine being 40 years in a desert with the one single aim of entering into the Promised Land, only to hear your disobedience cause you to be denied that entrance? One moment of disobedience cost him greatly just as many obediences rewarded him.

Sonship is an exchange of life. It is covenant – His life for your life.

Nothing shows character more than in the moment when discipline is required where there is no motivation or inspiration, but only raw obedience. When everything that is flesh cries out against that which is required, but yet you still obey. Jesus cried, “Father not My will be done, but Yours.” (Luke 22: 42 KJV) This is the very opposite of the first Adam who chose his own will over God’s will. He ate the forbidden fruit and because of that the sin of pride, wanting to be as God, has taken root in him and became the very tree from which he lived. Jesus’s whole life was lived from living from the tree of life, in humility and submission to the Father. This was His victory over the enemy. For in that very moment it was settled. He would go. He would do it. He would die. What an obedience! The power of God cannot be separated from His character in us. Moses was known as the meekest man and God used him greatly in power. He called Moses His friend. This speaks of covenant. After a covenant was made, one became friends. This is why Jesus said to His disciples that He no longer calls them servants, but they are His friends (John 15 KJV). This is also why the book of Proverbs says that there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18: 24 KJV). This friendship is covenant friendship. The bond is greater than any other earthly bond. Jesus makes this covenant with us, saying, your enemies are My enemies, My strength is your strength, My authority is yours. I am for you. The greatest of this is the words, I no longer

call you servants, but you are My friends. This is like Jonathan and David. There was no greater bond than a blood covenant bond. We have this bond and greater with Jesus. It was made not with the blood of an animal, but His own blood. Moses had such a relationship with God and God used him mightily. However, Moses was terribly misunderstood and a lonely prophet of God. His obediences cost him dearly, but his reward was so much greater. We have to embrace the reality that we are no longer our own. That we are under new ownership. That the Spirit has come to live in us and through us. That our previous reasons for being has now been replaced with a new reason for being. And that is to live for His glory. That is covenant. His life in exchange for ours. Every act of obedience is in essence a death unto ourselves. When a covenant is made, there has to be blood spilled. However, we too have to do our part of the covenant. In order to receive His life, we have to die to our own. Something always has to be given up in the process. This is the divine exchange of life in Him. Jesus said that whosoever desires to save his life will lose it, but he who loses his life, shall find it. It could be time, comfort, sleep, eating, little things we take for granted, or that which feeds the flesh. As we grow in the Lord, He draws us into greater holiness where that which is good, is no longer acceptable to us. It will no longer be about whether something is sinful, but whether it is His will. You will find that you will stop watching certain programs on television. It may be permissible, but He leads you to lay it down. Later on, you become jealous of your time with the Lord, and feel that the programs that you do watch wastes your time, and eventually you give it up all together. The same goes with your clothes. What used to be acceptable to you becomes inappropriate, and that which is too luxurious becomes something you are ashamed of. Instead of it giving God the glory, it gives you the glory. Is it important for you to wear brand names? I am not saying we should not wear brand names. But we have to ask ourselves if we identify with what it stands for. Prestige, money or pride of life. You have to be able to give it all up, should He ask you to. I still have a wedding ring with many diamonds in. It is quite a shiner. I no longer wear it. I had many poor people knocking at my door. How could they ever believe that my life is difficult and that I could identify with them with that ring on my finger? I had to be realistic. I also had to ask myself how important is that ring to me versus the salvation of another. Eternity is always at stake. In my marriage I had to decide whether feeling loved by my husband was more important than my husband returning to the Lord. I had to change what I was praying about. You have to be aware of your motives in why you wear what you wear. What kind of car do you drive? Is it necessary to drive the car you do? Should we all drive the latest wreck? Of course not. But once again, it is about motives and values. Do you still love this world? Do you really love Him more? We change as our values change, and our values change only as we spend more time with Him who is holy. This asks of us discipline to not only recognise

the promptings of the Spirit, but to keep walking daily in His discipline. We do not do this so that we can be “holier than thou”, but in humility we want to serve God and others. We want our conscience to be clear before God and man. As a woman, are you aware that your choice of clothing tempts men? Are you aware that your tightfitting clothing does not portray the holiness of God? Does this offend you? Nobody said that you have to look like a nun. But do your clothes glorify God? We have to grow in grace just like Jesus who grew in grace as a child through the obedience of every moral crisis, not according to man’s standard, but God’s. I say moral crises, because morals have never been more under attack than now.

Jesus said in John 10, “Nobody can take my life from Me, but I lay it down willingly. That is why the Father loves Me, because I lay My life down for My sheep. About a year ago, I realized that I had some pain going down my right leg. It turned out to be my lower back that was starting to degenerate. The neurologist made no joke about the importance of me having to have to lose weight as part of my healing process. In a matter of two and half months I lost 17kg just by eating right. It is amazing how not having a choice caused me to set my mind to losing the weight. It is safe to say that in that time I had a single eye. Nothing was as important to me. I was absolutely gobsmacked that I could get right what I have wanted to do for 14 years, since the birth of my daughter. I just could not lose the weight before. It was always such a struggle. Losing the smallest amount of weight was a massive achievement for me. When I sat down to think about it, I realized that it was because I did not have a choice in the matter once the neurologist told me what was at stake.

The question I would like to ask in this regard is, is the losing of this weight true discipline? I was driven by fear. Yes, I had to apply discipline, but discipline is not as simple as just doing the right thing. Very much like the little boy that told his teacher after she told him to sit down, that he would sit down, but she needed to understand that he was standing on the inside. The Lord said that He does not look at the outer, but He searches the heart and all our actions are weighed by Him. Why was I not able to lose this weight before? Motivation. The enemy always desires to control, but the Spirit of God desires to bring us into submission. Jesus had a choice. His Father did not force Him. He said, I lay my life willingly down and He also said that at any time He could ask His Father to send angels to protect Him. His love for the Father was His motivation. As the Son of God, who intimately knew the Father, and being one with the Father and the Father with Him, He felt the pulsating love of His Father in His own heart for the lost. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in Him, would not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16 KJV).

Discipline is a willing obedience out of love. In truth, to obey because we are forced is much easier than to humble yourself and to obey. 1 John 2: 3 – 6 says “And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk, even as He walked.” The root of obedience is love. He becomes our source of obedience, but also our motivation for the obedience. How many believers out there obey God truly out of love? And I am not talking about doing that which we love to do. I do not promote works based salvation. I have myself failed way too often in my own attempt to save myself. However, Ephesians 6 says that we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which He foreordained that we may walk in it. God says that He desires that we should walk by faith and that we should have the accompanying works with our faith. Works of obedience. Jesus said, if you love Me, you will do my commandments. What kind of love is this that is willing to sacrifice all for Him? What kind of love is it that will leave husband and wife, children and friends, family, dreams etc. all for Him? When I say leave, I mean that should God require that such a person should leave them, it is a done deal and that they will. In other words, nobody and nothing has a hold on that person’s heart. As much as we love our children, our husband or wife, they do not have a place in our heart. There is only one place in our hearts and that place is occupied and ruled by Him. God does not share our heart with others. He said we are to love Him with ALL our heart, mind and strength. We love our children and husband or wife with His love, not our own. God’s will and glory has pre-eminence. But once again, what kind of love is this? This is a relational love. A love born out of communion with Him. A love where there is a friendship shared that is so intimate and so secure that there is a knowing that you have His ear, and He has yours. It is covenant. It is a holy unity of the Spirit. Nothing short of God’s love in us.

I asked the Lord a time ago to pour out His love in my heart afresh. I was asking for His love to transform me and not just give me a warm fuzzy feeling. His reply to me was that I do not know what I am asking. Followed by His quote in John 15 – No one has greater love than He that is willing to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends. I no longer call you my servants, but my friends.

“Are you willing to lay down your life for others?” he asked me.

Father was saying, are you willing to pay the price for this kind of love.

“I love all my children, but this kind of love is costly, it is deadly as much as it is glorious.”

“Yes Lord, but please prepare my heart”, was my reply.

I did not say this lightly at all. Do you understand that ultimate obedience is ultimate love? Your level of obedience is a very clear indicator of your love for the Lord and you should be honest about it. Because all that matters in the end is what He thinks about it. Nothing is hidden from Him. The more my eyes are on Him, the more I fall in love with Him. The more I want to please Him. What breaks His heart, breaks my heart. Once I earnestly started to seek His face, my greatest cry became for authenticity – the real thing. Little did I know that, that which is authentic is eternal, and therefore ultimate. But I went for broke! I spent so many years praying, reading, journaling, seeking Him, allowing His Spirit to strip me and deal with me thoroughly for years. I had to get to the end of myself and there was only one way to do that – at the cross, by His Spirit. I learned and grew so much in that season. It took 12 years. This does not mean it will take that long for you. It may take less or even longer. Just this morning I was thinking of how difficult that season was for me. I felt as if that wilderness period would never end and that I was destined to live a Christian life of falling down and getting up. I was desperate for this life of abundance He promised me. He never forced this on me. I knew that without holiness I will not see God (Hebrews 12: 14 KJV) and with my whole heart I wanted to be made holy, not just in word, but in reality. Discipline is an act of love. You cannot separate the two. Father affirmed His love to Jesus when in obedience Jesus fulfilled prophecy by being baptized – “This is My beloved Son!” The incarnation of Christ was amongst many things to be the way that Jesus would be the patterned Son for us. We serve God as sons. We obey Him as sons, we choose to suffer and die for Him as sons – just like His Son! How do we become sons like Jesus? By our identification with Him through His obedience. We must walk as He walked. Our identification is lived out in our walking and our dying.

Hebrews 5:8 (KJV)

⁸ Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Philippians 2:8 (KJV)

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

And Jesus said, “Come follow Me...”

9.

Buffeting the Body

In 1 Corinthians 9: 23 – 27 Paul states, “I do all things for the gospel’s sake that I may be a joint partaker thereof. Know ye not that they which run a race, run all, but only one receiveth the prize? Even so run ye that ye may attain. And every man that striveth for mastery is temperate in all things. But they do it to win a corruptible crown but we an incorruptible. I therefore run not as one uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body that I may bring it into submission lest by any means after I have preached to another I myself should be a castaway. 1 Corinthians 6: 19 says, “What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own? You have been bought with a price: Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

I would like to bring your attention to Paul’s motive. His reason for buffeting His body. It is not that of being ashamed for falling short, but rather to do ALL things for the gospel’s sake and to be a joint partaker thereof.

This is so foreign to us. For the gospel’s sake. Do we do all things in our lives for the gospel’s sake? Is our conscience even pricked by this? The gospel was of such high value to Paul that he placed his body under severe discipline. He even called the gospel, his gospel. The gospel to him was everything. What is the gospel?

Romans 1:16 (KJV)

¹⁶For 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.

Once again, if we do not see eternally and consider that what we are about, then we lose sight of the purposes of God. We only see our purpose. We hear that God has a purpose for us and go on this quest to find it. But should we seek His purpose, we will find that it is only in preparing us that we discover ours. We are to seek His Kingdom first. The gospel will not be our motive for buffeting our body if we do not hold it in the light of eternity.

In this world where one lives for “Numero Uno”, your body is there so that you can fulfil its desires, pleasures, gratifications and every whim by whatever means. However, the Word states in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.”

What a requirement of us! To buffet means to violently subdue. It is our very desires of our body that has to be subdued. The lusts of the flesh have to die so that the body fulfil the Lord's desires. Paul wrote this in Rome when they were constantly exposed to the exercising regime of the Olympians. Their training was for a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. Research shows that he was probably paying close attention to their habits and determination to be the best. The aim is not to hurt our bodies. Where we used to serve the body, the body now serves us in the service of the Lord. This subduing the body, or keeping the body under submission to Christ is not a mild subduing. This is getting up early to pray on a cold winter's night before the sun rises. This is the fasting that requires more than just a day. This is the setting aside time to practice the discipline of bible study and memorizing scripture, where you would have otherwise been occupied with that which gratifies the flesh. The body becomes your slave. Watchman Nee in his book, *The Character of God's Workman* asks the question, "How can anyone serve God if his body is not in subjection to him?" He states that we have to set before us continually the motive for this buffeting - the reward. As a royal priesthood, holy unto God, our reward is God Himself! Anyone exercising for the Olympics trains mercilessly for hours and adjusts their sleeping and eating habits accordingly. The whole time their eyes are singularly on the prize. How much more of importance is this race we are running, which has eternal value? He states that those who strive for mastery are temperate in all things. We are to be temperate in all things. The Word says that our moderation must be known by all men in *Philippians 4: 5*. This means not that we should be overly strict, but that we should hold to the heart and intent of the law, which is love. We make a choice to abstain from that which is lessor or inferior or of the flesh, to gain that which is greater, superior and of the Spirit. *Galatians 6: 7* says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sow He shall reap. For he that sows to the flesh shall reap according to the flesh corruption. And he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life eternal. But let us not be weary in doing well. For if we faint not, we shall reap in due time." Whatever we sow in the spirit, we will reap in abundance. Our eyes, our ears, our mouths, everything of our body is for the glory of God. It is the vehicle through which He expresses His glory, the light in this dark world. As Watchman Nee says, all the functions of our bodies are gathered up to perform one feat, which is to run to win.

What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? It simply means that we allow our High Priest to use His Word to perform its work in us, which is to divide between bone and marrow, and the motives and intents of the heart (*Hebrews 4: 12 KJV*). To expose every hidden area in our lives with the cutting away of the flesh and to lay all things bare before Him. To walk in complete transparency

before Him. Someone once said that the High Priests were very much like butchers. They were covered in blood and every part of the sacrifice had a purpose. The High Priest had to consume the sacrifice. It was holy unto the Lord. We have to understand that Jesus was the sacrifice in His covenant with us, and so our lives too have to be given up in this covenant by being a living sacrifice. There is a mutual giving up of life for a life in a covenant – a holy exchange. The whole book of Hebrews is about this very New Covenant and High Priestly Office of Jesus Christ.

Romans 12: 1 - 2 is two-fold. The first is the renewing of the mind and the second to be a living sacrifice. Both of these are a work of the Word of God in us. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit that the High Priest uses to cut the sacrifice open and the Word of God is also with what the Lord renews our minds. Cutting away the flesh or foreskins of our hearts. We cannot expect our minds to be renewed and our lives to be transformed if we do not make an effort to meditate on the Word and allow the Holy Spirit to show us areas in our lives we need to deal with. To show us how much of the world is still in us and how much of the world we still hold onto. We have to be led by the Spirit when we read the Word. The Word of God is holy and to read it flippantly or just out of habit is something that no Christian should ever do. God is seeking those who tremble at His Word. God requires us to be transformed in our thinking and our being. This is a process of sanctification and preparation for ministry, which is far more important than a theological degree. We have a better understanding of God's will the more we mature in the Lord, as He renews our minds. If our minds still think like the world, and still hold on to its traditions, we will perceive God's will through those lenses. The Lord wants us to know His good will, acceptable and perfect will. There is so much grace in this statement. Father knows that His children grow in different ways and at a different pace. The whole purpose is that we would be equipped to minister to the Body of Christ and therefore also not look down on each other, because we understand that everyone has to go through various degrees of testing and discipline as His children. We are a family, the family of God.

The real question is whether you are under your body's control or your body under your control? Are you able to subdue your passions and cravings? Are you still giving in to your desire for retribution and sense of justice? Are you unable to say no on a daily basis to food that you know is your weakness? Have you mastered fasting? Can you do extended fasts? Are you able to discipline yourself with exercise? Please understand that I am not just talking about the obvious sins like swearing or bad eating habits, but I am talking about being able to say no to that which is lawful in order to buffet your body? This is very much like the principle of love. We love those who love us, but to love those who hate us, is a death unto self. It is easy to give things up that are

bad for us, but what about that which is good, like sleep, comfort, entertainment, friends, vacations, books and sermons? The aim is to buffet, not stroke into a comfortable spiritual sleep and call that submission. This is a call to resoluteness. Is it forever? No, but this kind of spiritual discipline is preparing us for our heavenly purpose. This kind of discipline separates the children from the sons. Those who like the warm seats in the pew and those who are out to battle. We are all called to do battle, and like all soldiers, bootcamp is no joke. But once again, are you willing? Are we willing to go without sleep for a whole night in order to pray? To fast from various things until there is a breakthrough? What if the Lord requires you to be awake for the whole of the night, but you are unable because you have not trained your body to go without? Jesus required of His disciples to watch and pray whilst He was praying to one side in Gethsemane, but He found them fast asleep. Why? Because the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26: 41KJV) It is obviously not wrong to sleep, but we should be able to go without when our circumstances require it. Other times, God may say that you have to go to sleep, but you still feel wide awake. Yet, He knows that you may need that strength the following day. Do you have the ears to hear? The moment the body is brought into subjection, the spirit is strengthened. With fasting we starve the flesh, and feed the spirit. In ministry our body needs to be in subjection and our spirit strong and sharp. As Watchman Nee says, “The unyieldingness of the body renders the willing spirit ineffective. He also says that running a race is not a daily affair, but training is.

Some of us do not realize just how much we value food, sleep and comfort until we have to actually give it up for a while. I remember that I used to be unable to function without exactly 8 hours of sleep. One hour less and I was useless. I would get migraines and was unable to focus during the day. I was sleepy and miserable and not a morning person at all. But worst of all was my irritability! All this because of one hour less sleep? I used to insist that I get my one hour of sleep during the afternoon. My husband told me that I made too much of sleep and that I worshipped sleep. Sadly he was right. As the Lord started to deal with me, I was able to grow indifferent to the amount of sleep I got and my tolerance started to grow. It was a mind shift and the difference is so huge now that I am officially now a morning person! My mind needed to be renewed in this area. My body’s tolerance grew as my mind was renewed. The benefits in the spirit far outweighs the sacrifice, for we grow stronger in the spirit and our discernment sharpens. Whenever I fast, I hear clearer and see clearer in the spirit. We have to discipline ourselves in these areas. There is a veil of the flesh that has to be lifted. This is part of Father’s way of spiritual warfare. Remember, relationship leads to discipline, and discipline to authority. Watchman Nee wrote a booklet on the book of Ephesians called “Sit, Walk and Stand”. What I am speaking about is built on the same

principle. The sitting is our position in Christ, our relationship. Walking is our discipline and the standing is our authority. No discipline, no authority. But the foundation is the sitting, in Christ, in the Heavens.

There are some that have to take medication and therefore have to eat. This is understandable and we need to use wisdom when fasting. But one has to ask how much do you need to eat for your medication? Certain medication requires a full meal, but this does not mean you cannot fast for the rest of the day or fast from something else. Are you willing to go without the whole meal or are you using your medication as an excuse? God is able to, just like with my sleep, and adjust your body not to grow faint when you are fasting. I have often found that He strengthens me so that I am not hungry at all when I fast. Even on extended fasts. All the glory goes to Him, because I love my food. But food will not control me. We have to be honest about our objectives and justifications, but also use wisdom. The Spirit of God will lead us into all truth. Our Lord often went without eating for the sake of the needs of the people He was ministering to. Fasting is for humbling the soul and starving the flesh. David said, "I humbled my soul with fasting." (Psalm 35: 13 KJV) When we fast our spirit becomes sensitive to the needs of others. Ministers often neglect to eat because of how busy they are attending to their flock. There are times that we should abstain and times not to abstain. But to not abstain at all is for our loss, and I am not just referring to food. We can fast from technology, movies, friends, and books etc. – anything that feeds the flesh. Compassion fills the soul where one would have had food. Virtue is produced in the time of discipline and living by faith.

The whole issue of discipline is about renewing our minds, whilst at the same time disciplining our bodies. We have to do both disciplines. However, the flesh is in enmity with the Spirit and the Spirit with the flesh. To think that you only need to read the Word and that that is enough, would be a half truth. I am only interested in the whole truth. Jesus said, if you love Me you will do My commandments. It is knowing the commandments and the doing that is the winning combination. Jeremiah laid for 430 days on one side of his body. Just think of the practical implication of such a prophetic act. Would God have required this of him if He had not already installed the character that will back such a prophetic action? God knows what we are ready for and will often put us in situations seemingly impossible for us, but He knows that it will require a certain kind of faith that has grown through the years, that needs even more stretching. What prophet of today would do that? These are the actions of a man whose body is not his own. His body was a living sacrifice. Everyone wants God to make them a prophet, but not everyone is willing to pay the price. Jesus said to Peter, "Are you willing to drink the cup that I must drink?"

John the Baptist wore camel's hair as clothing and ate honey and locusts whilst living in the wilderness. "What kind of training had to be done in preparation for such a way of living?" We would make a grave mistake to think that John did not have a choice in the matter. God uses willing vessels. Yet, to whom was the privilege of the revelation of the Son of God revealed to at the Jordan – John. What a glory that must have been! It is in these requirements of God where we have to live in the Spirit, which is to be led by the Spirit, the flesh will throw a "hissy-fit" and protest against these "extremes". All to ensure that its comfort and pleasures are maintained and secured. But God has called each one of us and 2 Peter 1: 5 – 9 says, Make your calling and election sure by adding to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, with diligence. There is a progressive nature and an accumulation of growing in these fruits, in order to establish ourselves and to grow spiritually. This does not happen by just reading our Bibles and praying in the morning. This happens because of an attitude of devotion to the gospel and to the Lord. A purpose as part of the Body of Christ. It is a race, in which we train ourselves, knowing that we will one day stand before Him having to give account for our time and the knowledge we had, and how we chose to spend it. Romans 6: 16 says, Know ye not that to whom ye obey yourselves to serve, his servants ye are whom ye obey. Whether for sin unto corruption, or whether for obedience unto righteousness. Eternity is at stake now.

10.

Discipline and Complaining

I want to address the issue of complaining. This spirit of discontentment that always craves more is one that causes our testimony to fall short of God's glory. Complaining comes from self-pity and self-pity from pride. The great I needs comfort, needs warm tea, needs the right shoes, needs better food, needs her sleep etc. The list can go on forever. What this complaining really shows is our sense of self entitlement. Our rights which stand in complete contrast to Philippians 2 where there is spoken of Christ stripping Himself from His divinity to fulfil the purpose of the Father. But Father requires that we humble ourselves as well in serving others, esteeming others better than ourselves. How can we do this if we complain about the smallest thing? We have no problem serving others where we are seen, but what if those of our own household requires us to serve them, even those who spitefully use us. The Word states that we must bless those who spitefully use us. Do we do this with true humility as unto the Lord? I was the queen of self-pity. I hated cleaning my house. I hated life in general. I felt that everyone was using me and no one appreciated me. I was drenched in self-pity. It became so bad that I developed depression. Our emotions have a profound effect on our chemical balance. One day I realized that self-pity was like ivy. It grows and grows and is insatiable. It takes over your whole life until all the joy is literally sucked out of everything you do. Life is just grey and black. For years I hated cleaning my house. It is one of the most unrewarding "jobs", because on that very same day, whatever you have cleaned will be dirty again, simply because people live in a home. No one thanks you and no one really sees what goes into cleaning a whole house. I murmured for years without end and truly felt like a slave and so unappreciated. This until the Holy Spirit started dealing with me. I realized that my circumstances were a gift of God and that as long as I was seeking the approval and wanted to be considered by man, I would be disappointed. For God looks at the heart and my house could have been as clean as Buckingham Palace, but if my heart was that of a prideful and complaining servant, I would not be pleasing to Him. My service and hard work would not have stood the test. We do our testimony great harm by our complaining which can easily lead to bitterness. Have you ever asked yourself, "Who do I think I am?" I hope the answer is the same as Paul – "I am nothing." God's comfort to us is, "My grace is sufficient for you." (2 Corinthians 12: 9 KJV) Paul had a thorn in his flesh. Did you get that? His flesh. The temptation was to his flesh, and his dependence was on God's grace to help him daily to endure and overcome and not to complain

and murmur like the Israelites in the wilderness in unbelief. To God murmuring and complaining is unbelief. It says in Hebrews 3 that the Israelites moved God to anger with their murmuring and that they were not allowed to enter in because of their unbelief. Self-pity essentially means God cannot provide. How many of us will do the right thing, but we are miserable doing it, and it shows? We complain and lament our responsibilities, instead of doing what we do as for Christ. God is not looking for sacrifice, but for a heart of obedience without unbelief. Do we even see the depravity of our own hearts? Oswald Chambers wrote, “God will never shield you from the requirement of being His son or daughter.”

Self-pity is a parasitic spirit and it has to be dealt with in such a way. You have to see it for what it is. It will grow roots of bitterness that chokes life out of everything. I became so aware of this reality that I now have no tolerance for it in myself or others. I no longer have depression and I definitely have the joy of the Lord! But I had to see my role in it. I had to realize how much I actually liked feeling sorry for myself. In that way it was always everybody else’ fault and not mine. This spirit also is directly in opposition to dying to self. Its head has to be crushed with vengeance.

In the May 15 devotion of Oswald Chambers’, My Utmost for His Highest, “The Habit of Rising to the Occasion it says, “Remember that you have been saved so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in your body (2 Corinthians 4: 10). Direct the total energy of your powers so that you may achieve everything your election as a child of God provides; (rise every time) to whatever occasion may come your way. You did not do anything to achieve your salvation, but you must do something to exhibit it. You must “work out your own salvation” which God has worked in you already (Philippians 2: 12)”.

Is your speech, your thinking, and your emotions evidence that you are working it “out”? If you are still the same miserable, grouchy person set on having your own way, then it is a lie to say that God has saved and sanctified you. God is the Master Designer, and He allows adversities into your life, to see if you can jump over them properly –“By my God I can leap over a wall” (Psalm 18: 29 KJV). First Peter 4:12 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...” Rise to the occasion! Do what the trial demands of you. It does not matter how much it hurts as long as it gives God the opportunity to manifest the life of Jesus in your body. May God not find complaints in us anymore, but spiritual vitality – a readiness to face anything He brings our way. The only proper goal of life is that we manifest the Son of God; and when this occurs, all of our dictating and our demands to

God disappears. Our Lord never dictated demands to His Father, and neither are we to make demands on God. We are here to submit to His will so that He may work through us what He wants. Once we realize this, He will make us broken bread and poured out wine with which to feed and nourish others.”

11.

Discipline Unto Holiness

We have three enemies – the world, the flesh and the devil. But we have three on our side – God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. And as the Word says, more are they that are with us than they that are with them. Or greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world (1 John 4: 4 KJV). Our spirit has been reborn and we are through and through new creations. The enemy gets it right to get us to believe that we are our flesh. After all, look at our horrible fruit! But Romans 8:1 says, “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who no longer walk after the dictates of the flesh, but are controlled by the Spirit. You see, as long as we live in this flesh box, we will have to fight it, along with the world and the devil. But our flesh has been crucified with Christ. Unfortunately our minds still need to be renewed and we have to learn a new walk. The walk of faith in God’s truth – which is His Word. The enemy stirs up the longings and desires of our hearts, and our unrenewed thinking and lack of the knowledge of the Word catches us off guard, and we sin. We are new creations, but we have sinned. Our job is to grow, to allow God to prune us and to allow the Holy Spirit in us to produce the fruit which He already has placed in us, simply because we abide in Him. We are not our flesh. That flesh has died, but the enemy knows how to awaken it from the dead. Our place is that of complete and utter dependence on the Lord. We are to make no provision for the flesh and not to lean upon the arm of the flesh in order to save us. We deal with spiritual matters spiritually. The only way is to embrace our weakness, otherwise no matter how much we ask Him to help us, He will not. In spite of our prayers we still rely on ourselves and the wisdom of man. Very often we ask for His help in that which we already ourselves have started in the flesh. Once we set out to discipline our flesh, feelings and opinions have nothing to do with it, but only His will. Father is faithful to lead us by His Spirit in all truth to show us how we lean upon the arm of the flesh in our effort to live right before God. All we have to do is confess our sins and He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us of all our unrighteousness. Then we have the responsibility to make sure that we have the Word of God in our hearts and that we believe that Word, and be ready for the next time that same sin comes around to tempt us. And so with a heart set on dying to self in humility, we slowly overcome the enemy by faith, by trusting the Lord each time for the grace to do so. We cannot leave any of these things out. It is a work in progress, and soon, if we remain diligent and watch and pray, we

will overcome. The enemy will no longer be able to tempt us, because the Word of God is the flood that raises up a standard against the enemy. He must flee. The enemy does not flee from us necessarily, but rather Him that is in us, which is why we need to speak the Word. Just like physical exercise the muscles are strained with new exercises and there will be some “growing” pains. 1 Thessalonians 5: 23 says, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God is coming for a pure bride. Father wants to present to His Son a pure bride. We are His peculiar treasure that He will one day present to His Son. Can you imagine that there will be one spot on our wedding gown? In Revelation 21: 9b it says, “Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. Having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like jasper stone, clear as crystal.” She is spotless, she belongs to Him completely. He is wanting to sanctify us spirit, soul and body. Sanctify means to set apart as holy. We might be born again, but let us not kid ourselves by believing that there is no work required from our side. We have nothing to do with the saving, because that is pure grace. But the Word says that we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. That seems contradictory. But it is actually referring to living a holy life. Positionally we are set apart and holy unto the Lord. We are a royal priesthood and a peculiar people to show forth the praises of God. But we have to learn by the Spirit how to live this out practically. No use we say we are holy, but we do not live holy. He seeks authenticity and is not mocked. Salvation is free, but sanctification is very costly. This means every single area of our spirit, of our soul and our body is to be purified. Wisdom eventually had his way with me and I realized that we do not know the value of something unless we experience the opposite of it. When we experience God’s judgment, we are immensely grateful for His mercy, which we do not deserve for one second. We do not know the importance of walking in the truth as we ought, unless we have found ourselves trapped in deception, especially religious deception. We do not value His grace as we ought, unless we have come face to face with our weakness and have no other choice but to hold unto Him. We do not value faith as we ought, unless we have been worn out by our own self-effort. And so the list can go on and on. The more He allows these tests and discipline the more we value the way He teaches us and the more we understand His will in our lives. Our gratefulness grows and our hearts sore with the knowledge and experience of a Father who knows exactly how to teach us His way, even if it hurts terribly. We rejoice in His ways. Are you willing for Him to teach you in this way? Are you willing for Him to sanctify you in such a way? For the moment you say Lord whatever it takes, is the moment where everything will go gloriously wrong. Yes, wrong. Why glorious? Because everything that will happen to you from that point on will be for your sanctification and for His

glory. This is where He by His Spirit deals with our attachment and conformity to this world, our flesh and the devil. It is ongoing and will last till He comes to fetch us. Not everyone makes this decision and is willing to pay the price. The gate is narrow. Many are called, but few are chosen. Many Christians prefer the comfortable seats of auditoriums and worship music, and are willing to tithe to the Pastor. If he does his part with a good sermon every Sunday, and not rock the boat. They will give him just enough to keep the boat sailing. Jesus told his disciples that nobody buys a piece of property without considering the cost. There is a very real painful price to pay for the sanctification of your spirit, soul and body. Although salvation is free, not of works, but by faith, the life of a disciple is very costly. He is coming for a holy Bride, but unfortunately not all will be the Bride, some will be left behind like the five foolish virgins. The oil of holiness, which had to be bought is costly. The foolish virgins had to go buy their oil, and because of not being watchful, were not allowed to come into the wedding feast. The Bridegroom's words were, "I do not know you." Can this be? He was talking about the church that will be divided into two groups. Those who will be holy and therefore ready for His coming, and those who will not.

If we think about it, would you want a faithful bride, or an unfaithful bride? Would you want your bride to have a pure, gorgeous white wedding dress, or one with spots on? Why do we think our heavenly Bridegroom would want less?

12.

Spiritually Fit

We also have disciplines of another kind. They too require a willingness, as do all discipline, because without them you could probably function on a survival level, but will you be truly living? Disciplines like set daily prayer times, fasting, meditating on the Word of God, devotionals, using communion (not just once a month in church), memorizing scripture, Bible study, not just reading but actually studying to show ourselves approved. Very soon there will be a time when the Bible will be considered as hate speech and will be banned. Will you be able to write chapters on a piece of paper like they do in countries like China? Will you be able to sustain and bear the torture because you and the Word have affectively become one? On the day of trial it is too late. You will have to have disciplined yourself before the time. Very much like the 10 virgins, it is a question of having a supply in the time of great need. We hope that nothing as terrible as this would ever happen to us. Are you willing to take the chance? Unless you discipline yourself with set times for these things you will come short in the day that you need them. Training the body is both the abstaining of certain things and the adding of beneficial things. It is the starving of the flesh and the feeding of the spirit. We have to have certain disciplines in place to sustain us right through the race right up to the finish line. We cannot afford to stop half way because we do not have the spiritual stamina, because of a lack of training due to a spirit of slumber and slothfulness. We have to be spiritually fit.

We live undisciplined lives every day. That what we know we need to do, we simply do not do, just because we do not feel like it. What is your capacity to suffer? When you know that you have certain responsibilities at home or at work, and you do not feel like it, do you do them? Or do you choose not to because you can either get away with it, or you do only that which is necessary in order to get away with it. Some are spiritually trained in certain areas, but in the natural they stink. We are deceived if we think that this is just a case of laziness, as if that in itself is not sin. We pamper the flesh and seek comfort so much that we hurry through our responsibilities. The spirit is sometimes in a very legalistic way trained and disciplined, whilst the flesh lives in comfort. We consider our quiet times more holy than our house cleaning or work around the house. In actual fact, there is not a division between secular and spiritual when you walk in the Spirit. All is holy unto the Lord. All is worship. We become white washed tombs. The world sees our pristine spiritual cover, whilst on the inside we would not dare them to see us the way we truly are. We

are all beautiful and neat at church, but our homes are dirty. It is said that cleanliness is next to godliness. This is still true. We have to realize that our hearts are considered “land”. We sow into the land of our hearts and if we sow to the flesh our harvest will suffer because of this. The undisciplined lifestyle becomes like an ugly stain on our otherwise clean record. Of course that which is spirit is eternal, but the enemy will use the flesh to discredit that which is of the spirit. In Isaiah 59 God says that even though His arm is not too short to save and His ear not deaf that He cannot hear, nevertheless, our hands that are full of blood (anger and wrath etc.) and our lying lips causes Him to turn away from our prayers. God is today, yesterday and forever the same. We cannot play Christian, we have to be it and take sin very seriously, especially if it can cause God not to hear our prayers. One may ask, “How will I then ever be able to come before God seeing that there is no one without sin?” The answer lies in the forgiveness of our sins. But God is not mocked by us just saying please forgive me only so He should answer our prayers. He is not a slot machine. He is God and He is Holy. We have to fear God. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding (Proverbs 9: 10 KJV). This is a lifestyle we are called to. We cannot just desire to learn the things of the spirit and want to train ourselves in spiritual matters but fail to see how the spiritual reality is connected to the natural reality. They have to be in sync and if they are not, it becomes the playground of the enemy. Authenticity lies in synchronization of these two realities. The one is a reflection of the other.

13.

Suffering

People like to live in unreality because they do not want to see things as they truly are. They prefer denial. Reality is not easy to deal with. It confronts us with our apathy and demands action. So unless there is an identification with reality, you will not be willing to suffer for the truth in obedience. It will not be because you have to, but it will be out of a vital union with His heart, seeing what He sees and hearing what He hears, as the Head of the Body. What breaks His heart, will break yours. Such a death, demonstrated by ultimate obedience, will bring with it resurrection life. Every condition in life has an appropriate obedience to bring God's life into it, but we must be willing to first see it as it is in reality. These obediences are death. It is a willing suffering. His love is a suffering love. Once we see in reality the true state of things as God sees it, seeing with His seeing, it will bring with it the ultimate urgency in obedience to God. Art Katz says, "We will not see the ultimate requirement if we choose to live in denial and it is the very reason why we do not have the stomach to obey ultimately. We will only be willing to oblige Him, but not suffer for Him, and therefore we fall short of His glory!"

We read in Romans 8 the following:

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

How will we then be able to stand as Ephesians 6 requires of us, and how will we be able to stand during persecution, even in our day to day life. We hear words like our warfare is not carnal and that it is not against flesh and blood, but our actions show that the reality has not sunk in. We still fight amongst ourselves hurting each other, the Body of Christ. What obediences and seeing precluded the Richard Wurmbands, Dimitri Dudumans and Brother Yuns of this life? And why are we so far from their realities? These are strange men to us. Our obediences which is as death to us, is God's ministry of mercy towards us who suffer. How will we be able to extend mercy to others if we have no identification with mercy? How weightless is our mercy and devoid of identification with hardship? Is this not who Jesus is – the High Priest of our faith, because of His identification as the suffering servant? Our obediences will often baptize us in weakness, so that His strength can be made perfect in us. Being broken vessels, marred by the Potter is not the actions of a sadistic god who enjoys the pain and suffering of his creation. No! The broken vessel is the one whom He has broken in order to deal with all the impurities deeply seated within. As

long as you have all your pieces together, you are still in control, but by your brokenness His very will is accomplished. He shares not His glory with the flesh, lest we say it is out of our own accomplishments and effort. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and by His stripes we are healed. All glory has a prelude of suffering and obedience of an ultimate kind. If you listen to the experiences of Richard Wurmbrands, Dimitrov Duduman and many others, you will hear of great suffering and their obedience to God in that suffering, which was of an ultimate kind. But their testimonies are not void of the glory of God and the presence of God in a very real way. In fact, their eyes were opened to another reality, which is of the spirit, and this reality is much more real to them than the natural. An interesting note is that of today's "Prophets" with all their dreams and visions, how many of them have a testimony of the accompanying suffering that preludes such tremendous visions of God? The question is now, not then, whether we are willing for such an obedience that will require suffering? Our flesh cries out for release and comfort. It hates suffering! Everything in us wants to be released from it. Can we suffer to say no when the temptation for relief comes to us in the words of "you deserve it, take it." Or, "It is not the end of the world" or, "you can do it tomorrow"? Will you be able to see this as temptation and will you be able to deny it daily? Day after day? Do you have the mature character to resist it by a consistent life of discipline in a history with God? Do you even have a history with God? To live before the audience of one, where no one sees your suffering and that which you lay on the altar, no one except the One who sees all.

And lest we think that our obediences are our safeguard, think again, because the enemy will make use of the opportunity to let us focus on our obediences in our pride, just as those who suffer from self-pity focus on their suffering. Paul only rejoiced and boasted in his infirmities and weaknesses. God's strength could only pitch over Paul in his understanding and bracing of his weaknesses, because Paul knew exactly what kind of man he was before the Lord saved him. This was the reason for the process of sanctification he went through, especially in all his suffering. Paul's focus was not his suffering or obediences, but it was the glory of God. For of Him and through Him and to Him is all glory! (Romans 11: 36 KJV) In the same way Abraham had to die in effect to himself before he agreed to sacrifice his own son in obedience. For Abraham it had to be a done deal even before he and Isaac walked up the mountain. Abraham was not in dread all the way up. In his heart He already knew that God would provide, even if it was going to be after the knife pierced his son's heart. And God's answer to Abraham was, "Now I know you fear Me..." How much did Father suffer when there was no provision made when His Son became the sacrifice?

The Word says in Ecclesiastes that everything has a season and a time. We go through different seasons in our life and some of them can seem unbearable. Can you lay down your will to when that season should end? Are you willing to let it last forever if it will serve His purpose? Waiting is not for the faint of heart. It is a death to your ways and an embracing of His. Especially when you do not understand.

“How one dies reveals who one or what one is. Dying is an ultimate moment, which reveals ultimately.” – Art Katz. Very often God brings to death even ministries, dreams and even marriages, so that when He raises it, He gets the glory. This is for us very difficult to understand. It makes no sense, because we cannot fathom that God would do something like that. It seems contrary to the Word of God. However, that is like saying that the only bad things that can happen to us is that which the enemy does. But do we ever ask the question why would God allow the enemy to go so far with us? He has the whole spectrum and knows everything years in advance. He is outside of time, sovereign and He knows what He is doing. Dare we actually believe that He can do with us just what He pleases just as the Potter has a right to break the pot and mar it? Not because He is vindictive, but because He knows the end from the beginning. He is the Alpha and the Omega at exactly the same time. The moment there is a jealousy in our lives for the glory of God, hardly anything in our lives will remain untouched by Him. If we abandon our lives and our thoughts to Him and learn to understand His ways, it will protect us from the pitfalls and deceptions of this world that will cause us to turn against God when things go wrong. So when the hour of testing comes, when persecution comes, how we react, finds us out as we truly are. It will either show forth the fruit of all our previous obediences, which is unto life everlasting, or disobedience which is unto death. Can you dare to believe that your sickness is for the glory of God? I do not say that God is the author of sickness, but is it possible that God has a greater purpose with it, than just your healing? The disciples asked Jesus who was responsible for the man born blind, his parents or because of sin? Jesus replied, “Neither his sin nor his parents but it was for the glory of God.” (John 9: 3 KJV) My interpretation of that is that God who has already written all that would happen to Jesus in His book, predetermined that Jesus would heal this man, and that it would be for His glory. Of course, any healing done by Jesus is for the glory of God, but surely the disciples knew that. Everybody wants to make sense of pain, and often this relates to having to blame someone. Once there is understanding of the way the Spirit works, you start to look out for those occasions because His discipline becomes a delight. Maturity starts to take place and mourning and murmuring is replaced with a teachable spirit that is willing to suffer. Not one moment in your life is insignificant or accidental, but in everything God has a purpose, whether

devastating or not. For God every second of our day is accounted for – all our days are written in His book. He knows our Aquila’s heel, that very thing that twists the knife in our already open wound. He knows what is needed to break the flesh. In my own life I can testify of great hardship and I came to the understanding that this was required in His great wisdom to break me. And break me it did. But praise God He built me up again! It was not easy, but oh so worth it! You can either work with Him or against Him. Do not think your inactivity is not a choice. If you choose to not do anything, you are still rebelling. But if you choose to be attentive to His ways and principals there will not only be growth and healing, but greater intimacy. Hebrews 5: 8 says, “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience by what He suffered.” When we start to serve God in such a way, we will be indeed seen as a peculiar people. People will see you as crazy and heretical even. God does not require us to go with the masses...the sheep knows His voice. His sheep runs to a different beat. They do not act out before contemplation and they know how to wait on God. The sheep do not follow other sheep, they follow the Shepherd. They are altogether not like this world. We will often seem loveless, either by our silence or by our words. The fact that we do not react and do like the rest of the church or the world, the way the rest of believers act, are altogether very strange to them. We are weird to them. This all disqualifies us for the world, but qualifies us for God. This is a people that do not find it necessary to defend or prove themselves to others, not out of arrogance, but because of their security in God.

Suffering is God’s judgment upon us. The sin which would not have exposed itself has to be revealed, in order to prepare the vessel, not just in cleansing and sanctification, but to strengthen it in its weakness. We cannot know God’s mercy without His judgment. For as we are broken in judgment, so we are built up into a new vessel to be able to have such a treasure within. A vessel (body) fit for use, which only would have come out of suffering and judgment. For as the things of the Spirit cannot be received by the natural man, who considers it foolishness, and indeed he cannot understand it, because it has to be spiritually discerned, so the spiritual man judges all things, and is himself judged by no man (1 Corinthians 2: 15 KJV). For who knows the thoughts of God that he may instruct Him, but we have the mind of Christ. The flesh cannot contain, apprehend or hold and receive into itself the revelations of God. He can only use us to a certain extent because of an undisciplined life. Living undisciplined lives both in the natural and spiritual. All because of our unwillingness for God to deal with us. You don’t give a sword to a child. Suffering prepares the soul in discipline and the body for endurance in times of travail. Who is able to share in the fellowship of the suffering of Christ if they have not been prepared and trained

in the school of Christ in longsuffering? This kind of endurance does not happen in a moment, but in the school of life, until we reach the full stature of Christ and Christ is formed in us.

Gethsemane is called the Olive Press. On that night, the Olive of God was pressed, however oil did not run out of Him, but blood. Our Saviour was crushed by our sins and by the wrath of God. No man touched Him in that garden when the blood flowed. It was His own agony and suffering that made the blood flow from Him. Blood flowing willingly for us and our redemption as the Son of Man. Laying His life down for us, so we too must lay our lives down for one another, as His body. There can be no identification with His Body, without the identification of the cross, which is suffering. A suffering that leads to ultimate obedience, obedience of an ultimate kind, even unto death. Consecration allows the Holy Spirit to work without restriction. Before consecration we sit on the side line and wait for God to do everything. Our will is passive. But when we consecrate ourselves to Him, we make a decision to actively engage and submit to His discipline. A life of consecration is a life of obedience after obedience. Watchman Nee in his book, *Releasing of the spirit*, says, "It takes consecration plus the discipline of the Holy Spirit to make us vessels fit for the Master's use."

Conclusion

A passive will is a slothful temperament. Very often we are diligent in areas that hold benefit to us or that we enjoy. People call us disciplined because they see our diligence in those areas, but are we truly disciplined if we are only diligent in certain areas that we like? Are we truly loving, when we only love those who love us? God is not mocked. If we want to be used by the Lord we will have to be diligent in our discipline in every area of our lives. Especially in the areas that no one sees, but God. God will one day judge our works. So for those that deem works as insignificant, the Word says that all our works will be tested with fire. These are those that are of the wicked servants that considered their master as hard, obviously not truly knowing Him. He will say to them, “Depart from Me, I know you not!” and they will be cast into outer darkness where there will be gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25: 18 – 30 KJV). This diligence is born out of a burden. Our own motivation or identification with the work of God is not sufficient. It is only out of communion with Him where we will be able to say like Jesus, “My Father works always, and so do I.” (John 5: 17 KJV)

To see past what you feel and the experiences in the flesh, the fatigue, the injustice, the excess, is to see into the eternal, which is reality. And with that eternal perspective is also a clear understanding and focus on an eternal reward. How much that eternal reward is a reality to us will determine the effort we will put in. And this effort will not be done by leaning upon the arm of the flesh, in our own abilities, talents and natural strength, but rather from out of a disposition for sharing in the suffering of Christ. For the Kingdom of God suffers violence and the violent takes it by force. It is one thing for me to write about this, but quite another for me to live it. Which is the greater requirement? Writing it or living it? And yet, His promise to me is, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

Paul said the following to the Philippians:

Philippians 3:10-12 (KJV)

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

¹¹ If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

¹² Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

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PART 3

DEVOTION

The deeper the relationship the more intimate
the knowledge, the greater the suffering – Art Katz

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

- Jesus the Christ

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Introduction:

Many people would describe devotion in the same light as sentimental love. A love that one would acquaint between lovers. Or even that of the love between man and pets. However, staying in step with the spirit of this book, we know that words have value and weight. Some things we have to actually experience to be able to know what they are in essence. And some of these things have degrees that we experience as our hearts are enlarged. This can be said of devotion. Devotion is more than just love. It is a mode of being.

Devotion is an “utterness”, an absolute abandonment unto someone, even unto death. This is why the only one worthy of devotion is God. And even death will not be able to stop the life of that devotion. It is an abandonment unto God, to be used how He wants and when He wants. It is as man lives that they are devoted. It is the life that willingly suffers, yet does not see this suffering as sacrifice. It is a life lived not from out of self, but out of Another. It is the life that with wholehearted devotion gives up all for God and to God that can claim all from God. This life has its being in God, through God and unto God.

This devotion is also reciprocated. It is not one sided. Quoting Edith Stein, “The limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of Himself to you, are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable; it is the highest degree of prayer. The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church.’

This reciprocated love raptures the heart, soul and body and leaves it completely ruined for all other things. It is the cry of the Bride saying, “I am my Beloveds and He is mine.” It is the union of the spirit of man and His Spirit in totality. This devotion is the lifeblood of the soul and has no regard for self. All is God. It has happily drowned in the ocean of His love having abandoned all for Him, Him being all in all. Not just the interior of the heart, but He has become all that she experiences. Whether it be pain or ecstasy. Contentment is found in Him and she is hidden in Him with God. The two have become one. One heart, one body and one spirit. Flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone.

All is God. Not in a pantheistic way, but she sees His life in all of creation, because she recognizes this life in her. His desires have become hers. His pain has become hers. He shares secrets with

her in sweet communion and all is the same to her whether she hears His voice or not. To be is to be in Him and with Him and this is enough. She has no desires, no aspirations, no past. All is lost in Him. All her streams are shut up in Him. Should she sense Him draw away, she is not distressed. Because His will is her meat. Whatever He desires, is her desire.

This soul has gone through valleys and over mountains in search of her one true Love. It is on this journey that she has met with herself, and left her behind. Dead on a cross. There remains a small semblance of her unique character and personality, but this too is swallowed up as her only identity is now in Him as she slowly progresses into Him in degrees.

This is where the incarnate Christ lives through her as the Head of the Body. Where the divine purpose of God is met in her and through her as He rules and reigns by what she hears, sees and speaks. When she speaks or writes, she finds herself surprised by the wisdom she writes. But always knowing that she is nothing. Because she has lost herself in Him. One does not know where she ends and He begins. She never leaves His bosom, but has found her eternal home now in Him. Abiding continually in His rest. No longer are any requests made, for in Him all her needs are continually met. She is not aware of any shortcomings that are often like wisps of clouds passing quickly by. This does not mean that she has no faults, but they are so few and never in an abiding state. She does endure hardship, in fact her hardship increases in greater degrees, but whatever her state, she is content. Like Paul she says that I have learned to be content in all things, whether poor or rich.

Philippians 4:11-13 King James Version (KJV)

¹¹Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

¹²I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

This is not learning contentment in self-control and to know how to go without, but a moment to moment dying that has brought contentment as a way of being. A place of rest where there is no more the battle of laying down the will, but the will has been brought into complete submission unto His will, whatever that may be.

It is from this place where she dwells and has her being that she proclaims as Jesus to Pilate:

John 19:11 King James Version (KJV)

¹¹ Jesus answered, Thou could have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

She is hidden in Him and therefore whatever enemy she faces has no power over her, other than what is given by Him, and finds herself under such great divine protection and boldness of Spirit. She is fierce in her assault on her enemies and ruthless to those who dare to attack His beloveds.

She suffers with Christ which is her Bridal state. A sense of “lossness” to the world, not depressed, but burdened with His burdens. She takes her place next to her Saviour, saving and rescuing souls. An extension of His arm in priestly suffering, prayer and outreach. She has nothing to gain. To be a Stephen for the Paul’s. Giving her life up for another. A quiet and a meek spirit. She wants to share in His suffering, even in His present sufferings.

It is from this place where she takes up her position in Apostleship and takes the Kingdom by force, subduing her enemy and setting the captives free. She operates from a priestly unction and the call of a prophet. She is His Queen and rules and reigns in Him and with Him.

To this her cry is:

Romans 8:35-39 King James Version (KJV)

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

She has returned from whence she has come. The bosom of God.

DESPONDENCY

(The outer-court)

Romans 8: 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 dwells in me.

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells 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 dwells 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.

This is one of the most descriptive passages in the Word about the condition of man and his battle against sin. Paul having written this, must have come to a very real struggle to have been able to write with such authenticity. To have been able to articulate with such accuracy the true wrestling between soul and spirit. One only has to be a born again Christian for so long before you realize that a real battle has come knocking on your door. Millions of books are sold yearly at Christian bookstores, counselling sessions and seminars, all spent on this one struggle. How to die to self. In essence this is the foundation of this book but ultimately not the end of the book. Before there can be resurrection life in us, there has to be a death. This death is gradual, but the ultimate end is to come where you as Paul on the road to Damascus no longer ask what can I do, but what would

You have me do? Your I turns into a You. It is the ultimate place of despondency where the searing cry of the heart is “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Every believer has to have their own Damascus encounter.

The realization of the enmity of the flesh and spirit has finally hit home and the inability of having any power within yourself to kill it. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing! A true knowing. This devastates to the uttermost. This rips off all pretence and religious endeavours. It is an ultimate place of hopelessness. Despondency is to be devoid of all hope. Like that little baby bird that I picked up, good as dead. No hope in all your efforts. No hope that your friends will really be able to help you. No hope in your ability to discern correctly what is necessary. Not even hope in your prayers. No longer is there any plan B or C. There are no more plans. Nothing! Not only have all the plans been exhausted, but all the plans have miserably failed! I remember at my lowest that I didn't even want to hope. I did not want to hope for my marriage or even for my daughter's healing or salvation. I gave up on hope. Proverbs 13:12 says: Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

In hoping I would only set myself up for disappointment and I was so tired of having a crushed heart. So tired that suicide was something I contemplated. I think that was my turning point. I knew that the Word says that His Word is a rock. If you build your house on it, no matter how big the storm, your house will stand. Clearly my house was sinking and falling to pieces. That is all I knew. And also all I started doing. I just read the Word. I threw all my hopelessness into the Word and chose to trust that those seeds would start to germinate in my heart and bring me hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV)

¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Some translations say, “To give you a hope”. When you don't even have hope and you have just become an empty shell, hope becomes like a fresh glass of water in the middle of the desert. And I was yearning for just one drop. And so I started to drink from the well of the Word of God. And it was there where the Master met me and quenched my thirst forever.

1.

Under the Law

The word states that man is sold under sin. Slaves unto sin. For whoever you obey is your master. This flesh is the very prison or dungeon from which you live. This flesh, this nature has been your master. It is not just contrary to the Spirit but it hates the Spirit with every fibre. Talk about sleeping with the enemy! It cannot submit to the Spirit, nor will it. Read that again. It cannot submit. It is not to be tamed or kept in place. It is not to be chained or muzzled. No, there is only one fate for the flesh. It is to die. And you cannot kill it. You have tried. You have wrestled. You have fasted and prayed. You have quoted scriptures and had people pray. Through the years you have come to face your inability to control your lusts, whether it was for food, sex, anger and a myriad of others. A continuous lust that flares up like a dormant cancer in your being. Never quite dead yet! Controlled to a degree, but never dead. This realization of our inability to kill the flesh is a prerequisite for this resurrection life. Unless we have become so utterly bankrupt in our efforts and have given up the fight, we will continue to fight this “good” fight. Not knowing that this very “good” fight, is the essence of what it means to be under the law.

You may say, “Wait a minute! I am not trying to uphold the law.” But unless you not only understand but also live the true definition of faith, you are ultimately still living under the law. For to be under grace is to live by faith. And the just shall live by faith.

Art Katz says, “Faith is the trust to believe, which expresses that state of mind which is sure of its object and relies truly upon it. It is firm inward self-surrendering reliance on a personal being versus credo faith that subscribes to the correctness of doctrine.”

As your faith, so let it be unto you. The Word says that whatever is not done out of faith is sin (Romans 14: 23 KJV). Let me explain.

Although we are required to live a disciplined life, this discipline is only the life we live in obedience unto Him after we have been born again by grace through faith. It is the renewing of the mind, the buffeting of the body, the disciplines of fasting, reading and meditating on the Word, being a witness and various others as well. These are the things that follow the cross.

However, I would like to point out that though we live in the flesh, we are called upon to reckon yourselves dead to sin. Dead to the flesh. Romans 6: 1 - 2 “What shall we say then? Shall we

continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

It seems we have a real problem here. We are told that we do not get to sin. We cannot continue in sin, but let's just be honest here. How many Christians, including yourself, do you know continue in sin? And yet, here we are told that we may not continue in sin. This is not to say that we necessarily wish to continue in sin, but we are a slave to this flesh. That which we do not want to do, we do! We hate it, but know that we cannot stop this...O wretched man that I am!

Romans 6: 10 – 14 (KJV)

¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God.

¹¹ **Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

¹³ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

What does it mean to reckon yourself dead to sin? It is obvious that you are still sinning. Is God asking us to be in denial? No, He is asking us to know that when His flesh was crucified on the cross and we accepted the price He paid for our sin, we by our faith in His finished work, now believe that the flesh is dead. Even though our day to day life testifies differently, we are to live by faith that your sin nature was killed on the cross with Him. Even on a daily basis the flesh screams to you and keeps telling you that it is not so, it doesn't matter anymore. Would that not in any case be denial? Let's look at it from another perspective. Let us imagine that you had a childhood friend. This friend was horrible. He was a bully. He said the meanest things and you just had the time of day trying to get rid of him. He got you into so much trouble that you later decided that this friendship was just not worth it. But he just never seemed to get the message. "Go away, leave me alone!" you shouted. You tried absolutely everything you could, but he never went away. Year in and year out, he said the most horrible things to you and you actually believed him. He broke your self-image to dust and used you to do the most awful things. Desperately you cried out for just anybody to help you. In comes a new friend. This one is super nice! And He has come to help. He hears your cry and tackles that bully head on. He lets him know that he no

longer has a place in your life and that He is now your new best friend. This bully is such a sissy and runs away. You learn that he went to a new state and is now presently harassing someone else. However, the next morning, you wake up and realize that you have learned some nasty habits from this bully. You still think the same. You get just as angry as he used to and you yourself seem to be just like the bully. But the truth is, you are not the bully. He is in another state. Gone! And yet every day you live as if he is still in your life and still has an influence.

It is important that you know that Romans 6 – 8 was written in a very interesting way. Chapter 6 is the solution. Chapter 7 is the problem described and Chapter 8 is the glorious outworking of the solution. So chapter 7 should be read in past tense. Many people read that chapter and think that Paul was really struggling in these areas still. However, he was explaining the struggle and giving the solution in Chapter 6.

Paul says that it is no longer I that sin, but the law of sin and death. You are not your bully. That is your flesh. You are a spirit being that lives in flesh, but that flesh is dead. And you have to reckon it dead and live no longer as a slave to it. Because your friend, Jesus Christ, delivered you completely from that bully. But you will never live this new life He has bought for you with His own blood, if you do not reckon yourself dead to the bully, the flesh.

This bully will keep whispering in your ear, and you will hear the same temptations over and over. He can do it, because you still have old thinking patterns that need to be renewed. But once you close those doors of wrong thinking, he can no longer tempt you in those areas. This is why the Lord wanted me to get into His Word and only His Word. My mind still had to be renewed to no longer think like my defeated bully. You see, ALL authority was taken from him and he was stripped naked and paraded before all.

Colossians 2:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Unless we see the flesh dead, as powerless, as only temptation and no longer part of us, we will not truly reckon ourselves dead to sin. We will keep seeing ourselves as our flesh. But we are not our flesh. That is the reason why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!(Romans 8: 1 KJV) When we speak of the flesh, we are not talking about the body, but we are talking about the sin nature. Jesus killed that sin nature on the cross, but we have to believe the bully is dead. Now we no longer live according to the dictates of the flesh (the bully), but are controlled by the Spirit of God.

Unfortunately, many Christians try to kill the flesh that in effect has already died. Our biggest struggle is to stop trying to focus on how to kill the already dead flesh, and to live from the Spirit. In order to make that transition, He has to bring us to the end of all our efforts, so that we can start living by faith. And we will only truly start living from faith when we repent from all the other things we depend on. We are to trust Him with ALL our heart.

From this place of reckoning we are to live our daily lives in faith. It may be a struggle in the beginning, but it is like a new muscle that is strengthening as you keep on using it. It grows stronger and stronger. This is where John 15 comes in where Jesus says, abide in Me, because without me you can do nothing. Abide in My Word. This faith, which is the rest of God, cannot be obtained without the reckoning. The reckoning is crucial for the right state of mind and disposition of true faith.

This reckoning is not a decision that you decided to make, but rather it is an outworking of the countless deaths through failure upon failure, that has brought you to this place of bankruptcy. The Dark Night of the Soul, as mentioned before. We have a reasonable understanding of our poverty when we cannot pay the rent or put food on the table, but bankruptcy places a whole new outlook on your ability. A few dollars in comparison with none makes all the difference. This is the reckoning. That only He can do it, and did do it. This is the veil of self that declares a spiritual bankruptcy to any chance of killing itself. We usually want to save ourselves, but in the spiritual we want to die. Just as we are unable to save ourselves when it comes to entrance into heaven, in the same way we are unable to kill the “self”. The enemy does not want you to know that you have died to the flesh. He is okay with you reciting the verse, but he does not want you to know it and live it in reality. This is what makes the wonder of Jesus, the patterned Son so amazing. For what we could not do, He came to do in the flesh. For being in the likeness of God, He stripped Himself of His divinity and became a man. And as the Son of Man, He learned obedience by what He suffered and became our High Priest forever more. As one without sin! A man, just like us. What excuse will we ever be able to have? Not only did He show us how to live and overcome, but He also is the sinless Lamb who paid the price for our redemption on the cross. If He sinned only once even in thought, He would not have been a spotless Lamb and therefore acceptable unto the Lord God.

We know this is all true, but to come to a place where we receive it in authenticity takes that all our sufficiency and dependency in ourselves be depleted. Divinely He orchestrates our lives to

miserably fail at every juncture. Yes, we may succeed in certain areas, but this only strengthens the pride of life if that succeeding was not done from out of His life.

The Word says in Ephesians 2: 8 - 10 (KJV)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.

¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

This saving by grace is through faith. Many people would like to say how we are not saved by works, but by faith. But how many of those very same people are trying through works to die to self? In the process to strive for holiness and righteous living is attacked as works, where in fact it is rather living in obedience to His commands. We have to know the difference between obedience, which is holy living, and trying to die to self. As He clearly states in John 15 that if you love Me you will do My commandments. In this same chapter He also says that unless we abide in Him, we can do nothing. All of our doing has to be by faith. Our salvation is by faith, as well as our works. Whatever is not done in faith is sin. But somehow the enemy has found occasion to cause many to forsake holy living saying that it is works unto salvation. The striving and the dying to self in itself is God's way to cause us to come to see ourselves as we truly are, wretched! From this place, His strength is shown in our weakness. Out of this place of death, the seed of dependency rises in faith. God desires that we shall move from despondency to dependency. The despondency is the ground for the seed of dependency, which is true faith. This is the only soil that the seed of faith can fall into and live from. Death. Death to all our categories and our reliance on them. A complete and utter death. From this place resurrection life starts to grow in ever dependency on the Sun (Son) to which it ever reaches and becomes its sole purpose to live for.

DEPENDENCY

(The inner-court)

Romans 6: 18 - 23 (KJV)

¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

¹⁹ I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

²⁰ For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

²¹ What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

²² But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When the Lord brings us through this place of bankruptcy in ourselves and we have finally let go of all attempts to save ourselves, He begins to teach us to walk in newness of spirit. Now we no longer yield our members as servants to unrighteousness, which is uncleanness, but to righteousness, unto holiness. Before this, we could not truly do it and tried our best, but having given up the “good fight” of trying to save ourselves, we now for the first time start to walk in absolute dependence upon the Lord, which is to walk by faith. This is a very vulnerable place to be, but also a very secure place. To whatever degree we have not given up our own efforts, is the degree that we are not walking in faith. And the just shall walk by faith.

In Hebrews 4 we read the following:

4 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

² For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

³ For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, as I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

⁴For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

⁵And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest.

⁶Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

⁷Again, he limits a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

⁸For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

⁹There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.

¹⁰For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

¹¹Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

He says, TODAY, if you will hear His voice. Not tomorrow, not eventually or when we get to heaven, but today. There is a rest for those who cease from their works. What works is the writer referring to hear? It is called the works of unbelief. The Israelites were guilty of murmuring in the desert and trying to trust in their own ways. Murmuring is in fact saying that God is unable to provide. It can either be a good dose of self-pity or fear, or even self-entitlement. The point is, they are for us a type and shadow of the process of stripping God takes His children through after we have been saved. The Red Sea is the type and shadow of our salvation through the blood of Jesus. He made a way through the Red Sea. We are saved by grace through faith. The desert is there for the purpose not only to take all of Egypt out of us, a type and shadow of the world, out of our lives and minds, but also to strip us from all independence that we have learned in Egypt. When you are in the desert with no means of water and food supply, nor clothing or housing, you have to learn to depend on God. So the desert serves two purposes, to get the world out of us, and to bring us to complete dependence upon Him for absolutely everything.

Paul says in Galatians 6: 14 the following, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

The desert was not a short walk. In the desert they were confronted with various enemies, but the main focus was always their idolatry and adultery and unbelieving hearts.

The focus was on them. Moses, which is a type and shadow of the Law of God, was God bringing man to the understanding that we are unable to fulfil this law, unless He writes it upon our hearts.

Romans 7:12-13 (KJV)

¹² Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Now when we read the above scripture, we have context for the purpose of the Law. The Law did not fall away, rather Jesus said that He came to fulfil it. But, when His disciples asked Him which of the laws were the most important He told them two new ones and called it the New Covenant.

Hebrews 8:6-13 (KJV)

⁶ But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

⁸ For finding fault with them, he says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

⁹ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

God never had a problem with the Old Covenant or Law. In verse 8 we read that He found fault with them. Who is this “them”? The murmuring and unbelieving Israelites in the desert. They were unable to fulfill it. Being the type and shadow of us, we too have to realize our inability to fulfill it before we can walk by faith, ceasing from our works.

So God made a plan. A Way. Jesus is that Way. But also His Spirit. Jesus said to His disciples that it is expedient that He should go to the Father, so that He could send His Spirit to live in us. The Holy Spirit comes and writes the New Covenant upon our hearts in order that we may be able

to fulfill the Ten Commandments. Jesus through His Spirit in us fulfills the Law and so we are able to stand blameless before the throne. We are hidden in Him with God. The New Covenant not only replaces the Old Covenant with two, but where it previously was written on stone tablets, now it is written on the tablets of our hearts. The moment of death to self, that moment when you have finally died to all your trying to give up your sin, is the moment where you depend on Him, which is faith. All you have left is faith. This is where the covenant is fulfilled by faith in Him in us. No confidence in the flesh. Where the Israelites lived by works and doing everything from the outside, we live from the inside out by faith. It can only be done by faith. The Law of Love can only be fulfilled through faith, by His Spirit in us. In essence love worketh by faith and faith worketh by love. We are only the vessels. We can love others and we can love God, but if any of our doing is through self-effort or leaning on our own understanding, we immediately move back into the old.

In the garden of Eden God presented a choice between two trees. The one is the Tree of life and the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God still presents us this day with those two trees to choose to live from. He admonishes us always to choose life, but it is our choice at the end of the day. As Christians we absolutely believe that we are living from the Tree of Life. But, after careful consideration of our daily lives and the fruit we observe, we cannot deny that it looks awfully like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

1.

Becoming a Child

God requires His disciples to be perfect. This perfection can only be achieved by faith in Him to fulfill the law through us. There is only one perfect, and that is Jesus in us. In order to do that we have to come to Him as a child. He said that we have to first be born again. You start as a babe. A child. But instead of being children, we grab the nearest “how to” book or go to many seminars, learning how to live this Christian life. But this Christian life was meant to be lived by faith. We become experts in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, even if it is in the Name of Jesus Christ. We become self-sufficient in our exegesis of scripture and how to apply it to our lives. But slowly but surely, our dependence is not in Him, but our ability to uphold what we have learned. This is not walking by faith. The only way to walk by faith is to be empty of self. All your plans fail, even your religious plans. This is why Jesus said that even our righteous works are as filthy rags. Why would He say that? Because whatever is out of self-reliance, even religious self-reliance is filthy rags. Whatever is not of faith is sin.

We have to become like children in everything. Even Jesus when He came to earth, came as a helpless babe, being an example to us. George Muller said that the more he grew in the Lord, the more he became like a child. He was one of the greatest faith heroes that the Lord used mightily. The greater we become in Him, the meeker and more childlike. Complete and utter dependence in absolutely everything. A babe has no defence, no rights, no opinions, no judgments, and no worries about the future, no plans or dreams. It is solely and utterly dependent. All they know is that their next meal or place of safety and comfort comes from only that one person. Not for one moment do they look to themselves and start planning how they can make their own way to provide for themselves. The issue is not that of never maturing, but rather that of always being in a place of complete abandonment in trust in Another. Never in self. As the challenges and testing increases, so the faith grows from little faith to great faith. The greater the meekness, the greater the faith. Because the meekness is the catalyst for the faith. And so God orchestrates the means to bring us into this infant state.

2.

Priests Unto the Lord

As we see how much we depend on ourselves, the process of consecration starts. Whatever we depend upon when it be someone or our own wisdom or principles, all has to be placed on the altar. Art Katz asks, “How many of us have placed something on the altar, but not brought the knife down and set it on fire?” Consecration is a priestly action. To consecrate something is to set it aside as sacred. But it is also setting it apart unto Him. It becomes His. At first it is our family and friends we give up or lay down. We soon realize that we no longer enjoy the things that we used to share with them. Slowly but surely a rift forms, not because we reject them, but in the spirit there is a dividing line made between the holy and the profane. Soon we realize that we, just like Abraham, must be able to leave our children too should He ask of us. We should be able to leave them not just in His hands for the provision of their every need, but also we should be able to walk away. Jesus did not tell His disciples that if they leave mother, father, wife, husband and children, even hating their own life, then alone are they worthy to be called His disciples, in a symbolic way. He said unless you do it. This decision has to come from the heart with a definite understanding that should He asks us to physically leave them, we would. This is no easy task. And a true dying. Whatever we place on the altar, stays on the altar. Never to be taken back. Our life that we are to hate is not just our money, earthly possessions, dreams, aspirations and our various talents, but the essence of the life within that is the strength behind these categories. We are to hate this life we have been dependent on in fulfilling all of these things.

Once it seems that we have given all up, we only realize that His work now starts deeper within hidden parts of our hearts. Closer and deeper He works to strip us of our impure motives and intentions. Pride is exposed in areas we never would have thought of. The desire to be esteemed and appreciated, especially spiritually. To be acknowledged and applauded. We reach a certain place in the Lord where we unconsciously become prideful of our inner beauty and wisdom. This too is exposed in His light. Our love for others is seen in His light and all we see is our hate for others that we disguised under the mask of discernment or “uplifting criticism”. Our prayerlessness and slothfulness in the Word. Our indifference to the poor and needy, especially during inconvenient times for us. Our selfishness within our own homes. Our appraisal of ourselves, anger issues and small compromises. Not that there are any small compromises. All this is brought into the Light and has to be dealt with thoroughly.

So where we thought that up and till now our spirituality has been impressive or even commendable, He starts showing us that all our spiritual acts, be it fasting, prayer, self-control, laying our lives down for others are all filthy rags, if not done by faith. We had hoped it would count for something. Surely this makes us at least a bit more of value than someone who has just given their hearts to the Lord? But alas, no. We have become saved by our own righteousness.

Philippians 3:9 (KJV)

⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

The truth is we can even start idolizing our own dying to self or religious walk. In the end we stand tall at the podium of our own self-righteousness, falling so short of the glory of God.

Knowing also that we have become so dependent on His voice or religious experiences during our quiet times, He takes us through various seasons of spiritual “dryness” where we do not enjoy the sweetness of His presence or His still small voice. We ask ourselves whether we have sinned, and unless we are aware of the season we are in, we will try to look in areas for an answer that will only take us further away. This is the season where we see that in all our seeking, we have indeed sought His hands, and not His face. We judge our quiet time’s “success” by whether we have heard or felt His guidance, or experienced His presence. Without knowing it we seek not Him, but the experience of Him. It is self-serving and He teaches us in these moments not only to see our hearts, but also to love Him because He is worthy. Not because we need to experience something. He teaches us to become confident and at peace whether we hear or experience Him or not and rest in however long He deems the season to be. At first a great sense of abandonment takes hold of us. Never have you felt quite so alone, having already given up all for Him, now even His felt presence is removed. Causing us to hopelessly fail in every category of our lives and bring us to the place of true faith. True faith is true in the sense that it is not compromised with our unbelief in any area of our lives. It is true, because it is uncompromised.

Oswald Chambers write in “His Utmost for His Highest” the following:

The Delight of Despair –

“It may be that, like the apostle John, you know Jesus Christ intimately. Yet when He suddenly appears to you with totally unfamiliar characteristics, the only thing you can do is fall “at His feet as dead.” There are times when God cannot reveal Himself in any other way than in His majesty,

and it is the delight of despair. You experience this joy in hopelessness, realizing that if you are ever to be raised up it must be by the hand of God.

“He laid His right hand on me...” (Rev. 1: 17). In the midst of the awesomeness, a touch comes, and you know it is the right hand of Jesus Christ. You know it is not the hand of restraint, correction, nor chastisement, but the right hand of the Everlasting Father. Whenever His hand is laid upon you, it gives inexpressible peace and comfort, and the sense that “underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33: 27), full of support, provision, comfort, and strength. And once His touch comes, nothing at all can throw you into fear again. In the midst of all His ascended glory, the Lord Jesus comes to speak to an insignificant disciple, saying, “Do not be afraid” (Rev. 1:17). His tenderness is inexpressibly sweet. Do I know Him like that?”

In this writing of Oswald Chambers I recognize the same hand that was upon me that day that I came to my true end. From that day, I have had a peace that He calls, His peace. This peace of God settles as a permanent blanket over the soul. It never lifts. I think mostly because all the emptiness has been filled with the abiding calm of the Spirit. It is not a normal peace that we experience, but it is the final entry into the rest of God. A real actual rest.

Finally everything will be consecrated. Only He knows how “deep the rabbit hole” goes before all is completely consecrated. Sanctification is the fulfillment of consecration. We are sanctified in Him, but are sanctified by Him through consecration.

The Word says that we are a royal priesthood and a peculiar people (1 Peter 2: 9 KJV). We are priests unto Him and as such, the priests do not live unto themselves, but have been consecrated unto Him. Holy and set apart. Even so, Jesus our High Priest, emptied Himself of His divinity before He came to earth to be born a babe. He too, had to strip himself of all His strengths and become completely dependent on the Holy Spirit as the Son of Man.

We have been saved from uncleanness unto holiness (1 Thessalonians 4: 7 KJV). We are called to be a royal priesthood to teach the people the difference between that which is holy and profane (Ezekiel 44: 23 KJV). How will we do this if we are still so part of this world? There is no glory without sacrifice, and there is no sacrifice without the priestly function. No priests without consecration and sanctification. Holiness unto the Lord. It is because the priests of the church and homes have been compromised that truth has fallen in the streets and equity fails to enter in (Isaiah 59: 14 KJV).

Priestly ministry is a lot of cutting, a lot of blood. It is a sacrifice of obedience, causing the blood to be on you and others. Ultimately that which you sacrifice will cause not only you to be affected by it, but those around you. You will not be able to do this in isolation, as if under cover, but the sacrifices will be your very testimony of your devotion to the Lord. Not only was the sacrifice cut up, but also completely burned. Parts were eaten by the priests, so in essence, not only with the spilling of the blood did the priests become one with the sacrifice, but also in the eating thereof. In the same way, our High Priest takes the sword of the Spirit and yields it to the veil of the flesh over our hearts, cutting all to pieces, and in the process consumes the sacrifice. This is the fulfillment of our part of the covenant we have with Him. When making a covenant, both parties are involved in acting out the agreement of the covenant. Jesus became the literal sacrifice, giving up His life, and we become the spiritual sacrifice, giving up our lives. We lay down our lives, in order to take up His life, which is to say, His resurrection life.

“We are to put on the garments of priests, to take off the garments that have been spotted and stained with the spirit of this world, and put on the vestments, the breastplates and let them be attached with heavenly cords to the God who has called us!” – Art Katz.

God is not going to enforce onto us that which is heavenly and perfect as long as we are satisfied with something less. You don't learn priesthood, you inherit it. There has to be a death. All has to be sanctified. Our speaking, eating, thinking, seeing and hearing.

Priests were peculiar people. They did not hang with the boys. They were a hidden people with profound authority given to them. Their function was to lie prostrate before the throne of God in the presence of the Most Holy. The High Priests were bound around their waist with a rope when they went into the Holy of Holies once a year. Should there be any sin in the High Priest's life, he would be struck dead and those on the outside were not able to enter. They had to drag the High Priest out. A whole year he spent ensuring that he had no hidden sin in his life, knowing the price he would pay would be ultimate. Yet, we think we can just walk into the very holy presence of God as if we are best buds. God is not obligated to give us certain experiences reserved to the holy ones. He is not obligated to give us anything.

“The calling of priesthood is most grave”, says Basilea Schlink.

The priest does not leave the Holy of Holies and then stops being a priest. It is not an occupation but a calling, a state of being. It is not something he does, but who he is. To be a priest is to make covenant with God. Jesus when He entered the Holy of Holies went in with a sacrifice, His own blood. When the priest enters, he enters in order to sacrifice. There is always a death before a

resurrection. It is a continuous offering of your thoughts, how you walk, your whole body becomes the living sacrifice. Therefore we are told in Romans 12: 1 to give our bodies as a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service unto the Lord.

We are told that the only way we can enter is by faith. The Word says, it will be according to your faith. Not a cheap “name it and claim it” faith, but a holy faith tried by fire! The word consecrate means “blood on your hands”.

We read in Genesis 32: 27 that Moses told the Levites (the priests) to slay their kinsman. There is always an ultimate requirement of the holy.

²⁷ And he said unto them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. In Hebrews 12 we also read, follow peace with all man and holiness, for without holiness no one will see the Lord. If we are to seek holiness, it would stand to reason that it is something to be obtained and not something that we get without a price.

Priestly men are not subject to moods and sentimentalism. They are without father and mother. No sentimental soulties that prevent them to speak the truth even if it hurts. The truth will set us free, but if we are so bound by others in sentimental ways that causes us to consider the pain the truth would cause, how are we ever going to be willing to yield the very sword God gives us to set them free? Priests are ruthless towards the flesh! In Ezekiel 44 we read about the defilement of the priests that caused a judgment to be spoken over them that they could only serve God up to the inner court and was not allowed any further. Many of us find ourselves still in the inner court. It may be glorious and holy, but His heart has always been that we may abide in the Holy of Holies. If it took the earthly priests a year to prepare to go into the Holy of Holies, which is only an earthly type and shadow of the heavenly, what will it take for us to enter into the heavenly? We are seated in Him in heavenly places. But are we in the outer court, inner court, or do we abide in the Holy of Holies? This is the very purpose of sanctification. To make holy, to set apart and to make acceptable, blameless and perfect unto God. This is what Jesus died for, not that we could only be saved, but that through our sanctification we may enter with boldness into the Holy of Holies.

We find that the Levites did not receive an inheritance, but the Lord is their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 10: 9

⁹Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him.

We have to understand that our willingness to die to self to the uttermost has the uttermost reward. God Himself. He is our inheritance.

3.

Living to Intercede

Hebrews 7: 25 says, Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.

Our function as priests unto the Lord is not just to bring people to the saving knowledge of the cross, but also as priests, lay our lives down for His sheep. As Jesus said in the John 15, No one has greater love than He who lays down His life for his friends. This is sacrificial living. Your life is a prayer. Not just in your times of praying, but in everything you do. Your life is worship. You bring continual sacrifices of joy in the midst of all circumstances. The only aim and sole purpose of the priest is to live unto God and serve Him. There is nothing else. He may be married, may have children or a job, but all these things are avenues by which He serves His God. His life is not his own, but rather his life is the sacrifice.

Many people feel that they are called to be intercessors. But the truth is as priests unto Him we are all called to a life of intercession. In all our dependency more so in prayer for He is not only the answer to our prayers, but the giver of the prayer itself. Prayer is a consecration. Intercession is a life given over and poured out to God in service to Him. This is not just in prayer. Intercession is a life for a life. We are not so much praying for others as we are actually praying for Him. It is the son that was lost and dead, found by the Father, who knowing his own wickedness and weakness, in gratitude desires to be the servant of the master of the house. It is not payment for salvation. No, it is gratitude for such a great salvation.

Just like the sacrifices that were made by the priests were endless during their feasts, blood and the guts of animals, of countless people bringing their offerings, so intercession is toil. It is a travail. There is a place of breakthrough for which the intercessor has to fight for, where he moves into the rest of God and he no longer intercedes but Christ in him, who lives in him now to ever intercede. The Spirit of God groans within us with utterances, knowing the heart of God.

Romans 8: 26 – 27 (KJV)

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ And he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

This toiling is to get our way of thinking, preconceived ideas and opinions of what we ought to pray out of the way and in that die to self when we pray. This is so that the Spirit can take over and we can be led by Him in order to pray the will of God. Intercession within itself is a death unto life. In this way prayer becomes the end within itself. It is me co-operating and being controlled by the Spirit. It is communion and fellowship with Him. In this is my soul fulfilled.

He has placed the need and accompanying desire to pray in our hearts, reaching out to us, to touch His heart by faith through His Spirit, to commune with us. The essence of prayer is to allow the Holy Spirit to pray the prayers of Jesus through us before the throne. We are hidden in Him with God to stand and meet with Him at the mercy seat. Christ in us praying to the Father. P. T. Forsythe in his excellent book about prayer, "The Soul of Prayer" says the following, "For it is the Christ at prayer who lives in us, and we are conduits of the Eternal Intercessor."

As intercessors we live our lives to pray, rather than we pray to live the Christian life. God is the object of our prayer, rather than the answer of our prayer. Through this intercession we move from the earthly to the spiritual where words take on their divine nature and become deed. Spirit meets with spirit in glorious unity and agreement. An inward mystery like energy fields that reacts to their different natures and essence, forming power to move mountains and create anew. Not only is the natural changed but the spiritual is set in motion. This is where the word prayed becomes flesh, the active conquering of the Kingdom of God. Prayer is a spiritual act and has to be done in spirit. Prayer is the incarnate Christ in me, ascending from my innermost being to the throne of God. Prayer is the central act of the soul, says Forsythe. It is what transcends from the earthly where we touch the heart of God in the spirit, coming into agreement with the God of the Universe, so that our heart beats with the very rhythm of His heart. True communion.

Prayer is our mandate. If we do not pray, it will not happen. God has established prayer to be the agency through which His will may be done. This is why true prayer will cost you. When we pray we fulfill our creative purpose, which is to commune with God, in becoming one with Him in spirit.

Forsythe says, "We lift our soul to its divinest purpose, function, and glory. The creation takes its true effect in personality, which at once resisted it, crowns it, and understands it, and personality takes true effect in God, in prayer."

In essence prayer, is more than just words or a request, but it is the soul being lifted up to its transcended place of being one with God in communion and intimacy. It is in this prayer that we are more aware of the object of our prayer and sure of Him. In these times Christ is more and more formed in us as we pray, and we become aware of the prayers of Christ in us prayed to the Father, as if we are quiet hearers of this sweet communion between Father and Son, in us.

The universe and all of nature and creation is groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God. That is the returning of the soul completely unto her Creator and Father. Life is in the blood, the very blood that flows through our heart. This life is of God. God's mercy to every sinner, is the fact that that sinner gets to breathe another breath. But this very heart was made for one thing only. To become one with the heart of God. This is why Jesus prayed in John 17 the following:

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

To be in sync with the heartbeat of God is God's desire for all His sons and daughters. The uniting of the prodigal's heart to the Fathers'. This is what the whole of creation is crying out for. For the sons of God to be brought back into glory. Not just the receiving of our glorified bodies, but to return to the bosom of God.

From out of this place we do not pray out of need, but rather out of position and power. Jesus said in John 11 when raising Lazarus, for those around Him, "Father, I know you always hear my prayers." The awareness is more of God's mercy and power than on the need. More from out of a holy love than of a seeking heart. Every fiber of His being knew that He was heard and that He would receive what He prayed for. Praying from a place of provision and power and not out of need.

Very eloquently Forsythe writes, "Prayer is the supreme energy of a loving will and believing soul engaged with the love that binds the earth, sun and the stars."

Equally eloquent and powerful is the words of Art Katz, saying, "The mission of the Church is not confined to this earth, but its field is the whole of the cosmos."

Again Forsyth underscores Art Katz by writing, "The goal of the whole cosmic order is the manifestations of the sons of God, the realization of complete sonship, its power and its confidences."

We are in Christ whose whole existence is to prayer. Christ exerts his life through us through prayer. This is sonship in Christ. This is the manifestation of sonship, which is the incarnate Christ in us living His life through us unto the Father. Prayer becomes the soul's food together with the Word. From out of this faith that is more than surrender, but adoring surrender, where it becomes an intelligent act and confession of a holy life, the child wholly dependent grows up into sonship.

This is where those who have matured in their walk with God, having dealt with the former sins and idols, being stripped of all trust in self, grows in sonship and take up their role as priests and prophets of the Lord, in order to take the Kingdom by force in an apostolic anointing, as sent ones.

DOMINION

The Rest of God

(The Holy of Holies)

We have discussed how the Red Sea is a type and shadow of our deliverance out of this world. We know that Moses as a type and shadow of Jesus Christ, took His rod and placed it into the Red Sea and the sea was opened up for the Israelites to go over on dry ground. However, on the other side of the Red Sea awaited the desert with all its challenges. The desert we know now is for the purpose of getting the world out of us and to bring us to complete dependence on the Lord. But there was a day, when the old generation of unbelievers was told that they would not be passing over the Jordan into Canaan. It was the Joshua generation who had the privilege to go into Canaan and no longer be fed with manna, but with milk, honey and abundance of fruit. A fertile land that bespoke of God's favour and provision.

When we come to this place of absolute dependence on the Lord, we find ourselves having gone through the Jordan River. Jordan means "going down". This is where our Lord was baptized by John. Our baptism is to be baptized in His death. But this baptism serves as a spiritual declaration of a death that took place. The death the desert has wrought in you. This is the true baptism into death. There are different baptisms. Baptism into death, of water, of the Spirit, of fire and many more. This baptism into death is essential for resurrection life, of which Canaan is a type and shadow. Canaan is not a type and shadow of heaven. You will note that there were giants in Canaan, but there are no giants in heaven. Your desert experience and death in the Jordan has prepared you for Canaan. Our sins are the reason why we have to go into the desert where He can win our hearts. It is there that we start to seek Him with all our heart. He is always touched with our infirmities and deeply acquainted with our sufferings. Always longing to help us the moment we cry out to Him. There we learn to share in His suffering knowing that no temptation befalls us that He did not endure as well. But in Canaan you are to live by faith, in God's rest. Even though Joshua knew that there were giants, he still called it God's rest. It is because the rest was not showing to Canaan, but that peace, that rest that has come through faith in God. In the desert we have to face ourselves, idolatry and unbelief.

Just like Ruth's husband died resembling the "old man" of Romans 7, she too had to walk through a desert to get to Canaan where she would eventually meet Boaz, a type and shadow of Jesus

Christ. Ruth's husband died and she was led into the wilderness by her circumstances, but when it came to Boaz, she had to lay herself down at his feet, in his rest. Likewise Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. There He was tempted by the enemy for 40 days and nights – a type and shadow of the 40 years of the Israelites in the desert. But He chose to go to Gethsemane. All this so that we may now live from His resurrection life.

When you cross the Jordan, you no longer just operate on the earthly plane, but have now moved over to operate in the spiritual in a new dimension and authority. Not because of any spiritual strengths, dynamic personality or gift, but rather because you have died to self. It will always remain to be grace. In Canaan we face the giants. There we face the principalities, powers and wickedness of the air. There we walk by faith and we do battle by faith in the heavenlies. It is a paradigm shift where it is no longer about your kingdom, but the Kingdom of God. Greater authority facing greater enemies. In the desert you face the enemy within, but in Canaan, the enemy without. This is where we as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God establish His rule and reign and where the enemy is subdued under our feet. This is why in 1 Corinthians 10 we read:

⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds)

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

⁶And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Please note verse 6. Having in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. Many people want to fight the enemy and often in spiritual dimensions they are just not qualified to, having not sufficiently dealt with all their disobediences. We have to have been through our desert and our Jordan. This does not mean we do not protect ourselves from the enemy, but rather that we partake in spiritual warfare in wisdom.

Romans 8: 9 - 17

⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

¹⁰And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

¹¹ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.

¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

¹³ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

¹⁵ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Please note what verse 14 says - For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

To be a son of God is to come into that place of rest where you no longer are controlled by the dictates of the flesh, but have come through death into a unity with God. This is the very answer to Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17. I have always thought the prayer to point to heaven, but now know that it is in fact a unity reserved for those who share in His suffering.

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

My heart is to relay in this book that with every truth in the Word of God there must be a corresponding reality that has to be lived out. We cannot take the truths we find in His Word and apply it to ourselves by faith, yet not live in the corresponding reality of that truth. We have to be honest with where we are. Because the enemy knows the difference.

To be a son of God speaks of authority born out of relationship. No longer a slave to sin but walking in perfect union with God. A relationship where the son has been tried and tested over

and over to the point where God can trust Him. Growing into sonship through obedience upon obedience, moment by moment. We trust God, but can God trust us?

Luke 18: 29 - 30

²⁹ And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

³⁰ Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

1.

Prophets –

The Ears and Mouth of God

Jeremiah 23: 18 (KJV)

For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? Who hath marked his word, and heard it?

¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone – Ephesians 2: 19 - 20 (KJV)

First it is important to understand that this verse, like most of the Word of God, has layered applications and meanings. The most obvious is the understanding that the Apostles and Prophets of the Old Testament paved the way for the new. Jesus did not teach out of the New Testament, He taught out of the Pentateuch, Psalms and the Prophets. Whatever foundation that was laid during that time, is what we now as the Church build our lives on. We also have to see this in the context that there were Prophets and Apostles after Jesus' resurrection. In John 20 - 21, also in Acts 1 we see where the Apostles were sent out. I would like to make it clear that not all are apostles, but all apostles are prophetic.

Lastly, we have to know that in these last days that we are now in, the Prophets and Apostles will once again function under a new infilling of the Holy Spirit and will be doing miracles again with great revivals. This is always the case we see with Church history where great persecution always results in great revivals. For this we need to have a closer look at Prophets and Apostles as those chosen by God, who will once again lay the foundations for God's Kingdom.

We need to be able to distinguish between the Gift of Prophecy and the Office of Prophecy. Unfortunately, some people confuse the gift of knowledge and prophecy as one and the same. But it is not. Both are given in a moment for a particular time and purpose. The gift of knowledge is the ability to know things one has no prior knowledge of before, whether about a person, event or situation. The things that distinguish a true Prophet is where he gets his counsel – the secret place

of God. The issue in these last days is not prediction, but rather the kind of Prophet that is needed. We somehow have limited the function of the Prophet to that of foretelling the future, but in essence the Prophet is called to reveal God to His people as He wants to be known. To speak the oracles of God, having heard from Him. He is an inspired preacher, however this does not mean that every inspired preacher is a Prophet. A Prophet is distinguished by his speaking. His speaking has a different tone to it. One where every word is calculated, weighted and always with a requirement to the hearer and speaker.

What he will speak will be an extension of who he is in character and gravity. Not to tickle the ears of the hearer, but to relay the heart of God in a given situation. These Prophets are men and women that have been prepared by God with hearts that have been dealt with. God trusts them with the message needed to be spoken. The Prophet seeks not the approval of man, but fully embraces the office he has been given, knowing that he speaks not for himself, but for God. He lives his life before the audience of One. Like Elijah before Ahab he declares in 1 Kings 18: 15, "As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him today."

I believe that for years the calibre of Prophets that were known in the Old Testament, will once again be in the end. The issue of the beginning will be the issue at the end. Elijah must come before Him. In the same way the Jezebel spirit that hunted Elijah down has risen again too. This calls for a different kind of maturity in character. In a sense a Prophet, though this may have been his call since birth, still has to be made into one. Where we have the gifts of prophecy which is more related to dreams and visions and occasional predictions, often given in a moment, the Prophet is forged by God in the school of life. He speaks out of a history with God where all his categories have been dealt with, in order to make him a vessel fit for this very purpose. This is completely different from the gifts of prophecy. As we see in the Old Testament, and even with John the Baptist, who is a type and shadow of Elijah, these were strange men. Living in caves, asked to do strange things. Always so in tune with these strange requirements of God, having to act out the prophecy or even be the prophecy. Hosea is a good example of this where he had to marry a woman of whoredom. Ezekiel laid on his side for 430 days. This does not mean that people will be doing strange things like this again, but it does give us a picture of just how set apart these people were. No massive following on Twitter or Facebook. No ministry outreach and books written on how to prophecy. Men that people feared and honoured. Although they were all brutally killed. A lot were stoned. Isaiah was cut in half. It was this very strangeness, apart from their messages that caused them to be so widely hated. These days everybody wants to be a Prophet. But those who are the real thing, do not advertise it, neither are they doing cartwheels

over it. The gravity of the office overwhelms, humbles and is cause for a life of holiness and fear before God. They walk with God and they fear God. An undivided ear and an undivided heart is required, consecrated unto God. When you touch the true Prophet, you touch God, for he is God's mouth. As was the case with Jesus where He said that He does not seek the witness of man, because His works and His Father is His witness. So the same for the Prophet. Does this make them men without fault? Not at all, but whatever God allows in their lives, even a prediction delayed and seemingly not true to others, is what God will use to His end and purpose, either to humble and teach the prophet or the hearers. Art Katz says, "The Prophet is the visible manifestation of God in man whom the world despises. Even when he is not speaking, his very presence is an abomination to a world that is in enmity with God."

When God prepares the Prophet for ministry, his whole life, the man himself is the manifestation of the investment God has made in him. You cannot separate the calling from His life, as if it comes from a gift. He is the thing in itself. The Prophet himself is the message without even saying a word and so to the Prophet and the message given are one. Their whole life and way of being speaks louder than their words, their life is the message. Whether prophetic or apostolic. What the man is, is an offense, as well as his message. I would like to make the bold statement that if he is not the message, as seen in the example of the prophets in the Word, he could very well be suspected of being a false prophet. The message is ALWAYS a requirement on the prophet to be and to speak. The prophet knows that there is always a death as a requirement of the fulfillment of the word spoken, and it starts with him. Whether it is in the enactment of the word or the rejection of the word. It is a life submitted to the cross. It can be that their whole life they never speak once with the gift of prophecy and still be functioning in their office. These are not people that have it all together in their personal lives. In fact, it is their personal lives that God has used as the very tool to shape them and mar them into who they are. Broken marriages or rebellious children. Where the prophet goes, there will be a wilderness. These people have been forged in trials of rejection and even abuse to prepare them to endure and run the race with patience set before them. God knowing what they will have to face. In the very same way, Jesus spoke what His Father told Him to, was asked, "Who are you? Are you not the son of Joseph, are you not from Nazareth?" Jesus was even accused of being a glutton and a wine bibber. In fact, if one should look at their personal life, it may very well disqualify them in our eyes, but what seems to us as disqualification, is God's qualification. What looks like life's defeat is actually the hand of God. And yet the rejection of these prophets because of their personal lives, is used by God to affirm that the message came from Him. Not from those who fit our paradigm, but the John the

Baptists and Elijah's. The message will offend, piercing the hearts of those religious who look at the outer and reject the message because of his circumstances. So that those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, will recognize the word from God and not as from man.

Part of the function of the Prophet is to prepare the church for that which is prophetic. How to recognize the real from the fake. The Prophet also works from an intuitive place, able to recognize that something is amiss, be that in the particular tone of a situation or spirit behind it that just for some reason does not sit right with him. Everything may be doctrinally correct, but yet something is amiss. Inside he will have a deep sense of discomfort and groaning and is to speak, exposing that which lies hidden. Not in judgment to be critical, but the Spirit in him is travailing. He is convicted. This intuitiveness did not come overnight, but has been formed in the hiddenness of his time alone with God, who is the truth. They are a burdened people with a jealousy for the glory of God. Always aware of the big picture and seldom gets lost in the small. They are about the ultimate purpose of God, which is the Kingdom of God. They are unique in personality, but one in their focus and purpose.

What they see and hear from God affects them profoundly, often living the message even before it is spoken. This brings a reality with the speaking, an authenticity and power. Everything to the Prophet is about the truth. He is absolutely jealous for the truth of God in every situation, especially in what he speaks. He has to walk in the truth of the word spoken. Jealous for the meaning of words and every word is calculated. Because the requirement of authenticity is so great, he does not get to have liberty with what he sees or hears and speaks. He finds it difficult to make small talk and does not quite know how to be one of the guys. He is not purposefully so, but he is set apart. People watch him for long to see whether he is indeed the real thing. Where everybody seems to go a certain way, he finds himself oddly going the other way. Always the spanner in the wheel somehow. They are serious people. This does not mean they do not know how to laugh, but life is serious to them...it has always been. And yet, God can even cause him to fail, just to get him to remain in that place of dependence at all times. He lives in the tension of the faith. Even the mood of the speaking or tone by which he speaks the message. Where others are rejoicing, he has the desire to speak the somber and grave words of God in a time where they may find it inappropriate. He has no desire to cause offense to be relevant or his message to be seen of God. It is not a prerequisite, however, it is often the case. To hear the mood or tone is to hear God's mood or tone, not his. It is not his word, and he is not allowed to draw any satisfaction from it, nor to want to soften the blow. He stands aloof to how the word is heard, but not aloof to

the word itself. Art Katz says, “You cannot bring the severity of the judgment, when you yourself deserve it.”

In order for him to stand in the counsel of the Lord and hear His voice, he himself has to be holy to come before the Holy and live before the Holy. He lives in the counsel of God. He speaks not out of his own life, but the resurrection life of God, which he only finds at the cross. So he speaks not his opinion until revelation has come. Each situation has its own purpose and merit, always requiring an ear to hear, and therefore dependence on a word for that moment. Never swept up in the present mood followed by others, which is often earthly and sentimental, but controlled by the Spirit. The life of God in him. Also, seldom a word prepared, but spoken in the moment. So much so that as the oracle of God, if God does not speak, he does not speak. Not given to the requests of people and their needs, but only moved by the Spirit.

Because he sees with the eyes of God, his word is like a hammer and fire, piercing as the sword of God to divide between bone and marrow, exposing the true intents and motives of the heart (Hebrews 4: 12). Where others may be quick to receive a word, he somehow picks up on the nuance of a wrong motive behind the word, even if it is doctrinally true. We have to understand that the Word says we are to guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of it flows the issues of life. If the intents and motives of the prophet is in any means tainted or compromised by a wrong attitude in serving his own purposes, the word will be defiled, no matter how true. It will have with it the spirit in which it was spoken with. God will surely deal with him.

The false prophets will be those who often make grandiose declarations of either prosperity and God’s favor or severe judgment. Not that it does not give severe judgments, but the spirit in which it is said, is cause for concern. There will also be words of exaggeration in order to “sell” the word and a focus on “me”. How are we to know that which is true and that which is false? Many messages given may sound right and doctrinally true, but are these the only standards by which a word is to be measured. Whether something predicted came true? Remember, the prophet is not separated from his message. Many of these false prophets sit at Jezebel’s table and feast from the delicacies she has prepared. It will either be in a financial form or that of prestige and honor. And yet, Jesus said that a prophet is not honored in his own town (John 4: 44KJV). The possibility is great that we will be astounded to see who the real Prophets are. They will not be of man’s choosing. They will not be given to the gift of gab, being able to persuade man with their own speaking, but rather like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2: 1 – 7:

¹And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

²For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

³And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

⁴And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

⁵That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

⁶Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught:

⁷But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory

The personality the most in danger of deception is the prophetic personality. Easy to be caught up in experiences, the anointing of God and intensity of what he feels. To think that because he is a Prophet, he is protected from deception. He needs the teacher to keep him there in check and to stay in the community so that others may be able to correct him if need be. Even addressing the exaggerated tone and drama accompanying some messages given. Is it possible that God can speak through you without you having to dramatize the message? Can you not just be you? Gone are the days that we think Prophets cannot make mistakes. We somehow keep them to a higher standard than teachers, and yet God has placed them in conjunction with the teachers for that express purpose, which is to complete each other. These two offices often stand in opposition to one another, because the Prophet takes certain prophetic liberties at times with the delivery of his message, whilst the teacher aims at doctrinal accuracy. Both are needed, but also both need to accommodate for that which God allows in the moment. A good example of this is when ravens was sent to feed Elijah. A raven according to the law is an unclean bird. Yet God allowed this and it was His choice of provision. Both callings are vital to one another.

The Prophet will be like a thorn and will be poking all in the eye. He will be as Elijah when Ahab confronted him and said, "Are you the one who troubles Israel?" (1 Kings 17: 18 KJV) Are you the one that upsets the applecart and our unity? Are you the one that judges us?

He fears God and not man. And even as he speaks, he will feel utterly alone and bereft. Like Elijah after his conflict with Jezebel, he will run to his cave, only to be fed again by the One whom he loves and fears. In the same way that Elijah said that there would be no rain, and had to endure the drought with them, others will look to him and say, “You are the reason why things are so troublesome!” It will be a constant dying over and over, not the elevated state we see of the many prophets of today. The truth is he is not even guaranteed that God would answer every time with fire, for the prophet is himself subject to God’s sovereignty and God is not obligated to explain it to him. Remnant prophets are forged not at the table of feasting, but at the table of leniency. There where dependency and utter surrender is forged into his very being.

Are you willing to be dealt with, even in solitude? Do not think this solitude has an expiry date on earth. It does not. There is often no pleasure found in the words he has to speak, for the true word of God is a fire and a hammer. A sword that pierces right into the marrow of the bone and divides the soul from spirit. It exposes and lay bare the intents and motives of the heart and leaves the hearers fuming with rage. For those who have ears to hear, it is as the healing balm of Gilead. Jesus cautioned us to judge righteously. Who can truly judge righteously unless you allow the Eternal judge to judge you first? David prayed, “Lord, judge me.”

We have to ask ourselves why God chose in these last days to build the foundation of the church on the Prophets and the Apostles. In both cases it is not so that accurate predictions can be made, although this is also something God will use. But the main function is for the Prophet to BE the voice of God. To be. God said to Moses, “Come up and BE here.” The call is to be. To be the message, to be the representation and to be all that God requires in a given moment and if need be, to speak. If the Prophet’s first focus is not to be that which God calls him to speak, then he is ipso facto out of joint with the true intent and essence of the Prophetic function. In these last days, God is put on trial by the “powers that be”. Claiming Him no longer relevant. The church in itself is a prophetic entity to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn (Isaiah 61: 2 KJV). God has purposed a specific function for the Church in these last days in the midst of terrible persecution and tribulation. To be that prophetic voice in the midst of a corrupt and vial world. To proclaim His standard and Kingdom on this earth. It will take a special kind of person to do so in the time we are in. Martyrdom will be ever before him as his daily tension in all he says and does.

I leave you with the words spoken about Jesus and the Spirit that rested upon Him, that I believe rests upon the true prophets of God.

Lastly, I leave you with these words of Jesus, which portrays the spirit of the Prophet, which is the Spirit of God – the Spirit of Prophecy.

Isaiah 11: 1 - 5 (KJV)

11 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

² And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

³ And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

⁴ But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

⁵ And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

2.

Apostles

The Sent Ones

Before I explain what an apostle is and his function in the church, I find it necessary to express, with the chance of repeating myself, true devotion, which is the soul of the apostle and prophet of God. With the risk of sounding sentimental, my only aim is to portray, if at all possible, the fervency and zealous love of those who are The Sent Ones.

Quoting my mentor Art Katz again, “Devotion is vehement, passionate zeal with love. Abandonment, worship and adoration with emotion towards Christ upon which end time privileges are bestowed. It is to those that God will grant power and authority, because they can be trusted. Because He knows them. Because what He gives will not be abused or misused. They are His lovers who are jealous for His glory and His honor. These are things that are reserved for those who love Him, that will never be shown, let alone given to those who barge in that think by a formula or method they will have the key to the Kingdom.

Devotion means sacrifice, consecration that is not cold or legal. It is not the abandonment that comes through pressure, but a yielding that follows severe chastening. Devotion is grand, joyous delight in the will of God, be it pain, hunger, suffering or exaltation. It is the heart of love poured out at the Master’s feet.

Devotion for Christ is the basis upon which end time privileges are bestowed. Because God’s nature is to give to those who have moved Him by the ardent quality of their love and devotion.”

This devotion has been formed in the heart that has been sifted over and over so that no chaff is to be found in it. A devotion that not only burns, but even consumes the lover and brings it into a certain mystical rapture. Not earthly and vile, but utter holiness in the form of agape love, a passionate love. Living water poured forth that creates bursts of true worship with unexplainable words to the point of stillness and peace that overwhelms and calms. This love is spiritual. It is a love that sustains, fiercely loyal and has only eyes for the Lover of her soul.

In the Word we find that there were twelve apostles in total. The number 12 in the Word has a very specific meaning. One can go to BibleWheel.com and find many descriptions of this number.

I will share only a few for the purpose of supporting my view. The number 12 is the Hebrew word Lamed. It is called the teaching letter. It is directly related to authority. The keywords are teach, exhort, convince. Lamed represents the “rod of the teacher”, which means to point to. Twelve also means completion. There are in total 12 Old Testament books about the history of Israel and 12 Minor Prophets. The number 12 is also referring to the elect, 12 tribes or the 144 000 written in Revelation 14. There will also be 12 gates in the New Jerusalem, resembling the 12 tribes of Israel. Elect means the “called out ones” or pointed out by God Himself.

Lamed (12) also means to drive out, to depart or sent. It is considered to be the perfect number, God’s power and authority, serving as a perfect governmental foundation. Jesus also started teaching at the age of twelve. Certain numbers are ascribed to certain things or people in the Word of God. For instance, 8 means covenant, where 9 means birth or resurrection. When we look at the number 12 and all its applications in the Word, we find it mostly linked to completion and authority as a whole.

Another name for an Apostle is son. A son is called to rule and reign. To have dominion. This ruling or dominion of God is not autocratic, it is an issue of righteousness.

In Philippians 2: 8 – 10 we read:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

It is God alone who appoints and knows what these chosen sent ones have gone through in His dealings with them. Hebrews 5: 8 says that although He was a Son, He learned obedience by what He suffered. Understand that the dealings these sent ones go through is God’s preparation for them to be sent as Apostles. He is the Author and Finisher of their faith. The apostle is not in hiddenness but rather sent out to establish and administer the Kingdom of God with the authority given him. It is a holy dispensation of wisdom, kindness and mercy in instructing men on how to live righteously. This only a son can do and convey. The sceptre of the Kingdom of God is righteousness. He does not allow himself to lapse into a selfish lifestyle, but is ardently and

fervently active in the Kingdom of God. With an eternal perspective, not earthly minded, he always has a consideration for the bigger picture, and because of this, is able to be more heroic and larger in his obediences. Obedience has a very high value to a son. Obedience is the essence of a son. Sonship is not only a glory, but a suffering, and the son is equally willing for both. He is not called to success, but to glory. Eternity is at stake in all his doing. There is a certain kind of ruthlessness that sonship requires and the Kingdom of God has his highest priority. The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent men take it by force (Matthew 11: 12 KJV). They are the ones that will turn this world upside down.

They have another mindset and everything has an appointed time and purpose. They are called to confront and have encounters with demonic forces and principalities. Paul, being grieved in spirit, was moved to confront those in Ephesus, proclaiming unto them who their “unknown God” is that they were ignorantly worshipping. He did not plan to go, but was moved by the Spirit. There was no sermon preplanned and written out for his convenience, but as the Spirit moved he spoke with absolute power and authority. So much so that some said they will hear of this babblers again, but others clave unto him and believed, leaving their idols behind. We know at the very heart of Ephesus is the goddess Diana and many more idols. Ephesus was in a way the nexus of idol worship and humanism. Into this spiritual realm he dares to walk in unannounced and declare the God they ignorantly serve, taking his spoil with him as he leaves. One man, in the midst of many philosophers and idol worshippers. Seeing them, he saw that they were worshipping God in their own image of man and man’s thinking. He saw apostolically. That is to say, not just that which is earthly, but that which is spiritually being manipulated by the powers of the air. His jealousy for God compels him to confront. This is not arrogance or boastful display of given authority, but rather a jealousy for truth. This is what Apostles do, they declare and confront!

The definition of idolatry is any substitute for the relationship with God, that falls short from the acknowledgment of His Lordship in our lives. If you have a crossless Christianity, you are serving the wrong Christ. The Cross is central not only to the gospel, but Paul declared, “I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2: 2 KJV)

The Apostle establishes the Lordship of God where he goes. He confronts idolatry. He knows that as ambassador of the Kingdom of God, a son, what his apostolic authority is, making confrontation inevitable. Because he speaks with God’s authority, backed with the character of a son, the word pierces and confronts and casts down vain arguments in its place. Every “now” is an event and is eternal.

Just like Jesus said to Philip, “When you see me, you see the Father”, so the Apostle speaks in the authority given to him by his Father. It is either arrogance or unspeakable humility. The words that came to me one morning is “walk in the knowing that we are one”. At first I merely thought this a general statement of walking by faith. Only later did I realize that this was requiring ultimate faith, which brought me down on my face before God for a long time. For who is sufficient for these things. To no longer concern yourself whether what you are speaking is from out of your own humanity, but from God, to walk in the knowing that you are one with Him. To no longer question your motives or next move, but walk in such faith, that every step is established by Him, controlled by Him, for Him. This takes great faith, only in utter dependence. It is much easier for us to question ourselves around every bend, than to have the “audacity” to presume upon God. In that way we feel not obligated to act if what we think may be coming from ourselves. To actually believe that your speaking, hearing and doing is His and yet this was His High Priestly prayer to Father.

John 17: 18 - 26 (KJV)

¹⁸ As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

²² And the glory which thou gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

²⁴ Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵ O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

²⁶ And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

All these years I have read this scripture as just somehow symbolic. Never really considering that there is a corresponding reality now. This oneness with God where you do not presume upon Him, but live from this reality requires a meekness. This meekness was exhibited in Moses. He was known as the meekest man. Meekness is an apostolic distinction. Great authority is undergirded with great meekness. There is a conjunction between humility and true authority. This meekness is born out of a deep conviction of the love bestowed on a wretched man who deserves death, and knows this profoundly. This meekness is shown in his devotion to the one who has saved him from himself and from hell, and God having tested and tried this devotion, bestows on it His approval and authority, moved by his love. Moses was the first Apostle. Sent by God to speak on His behalf to the super power of that age, declaring Him as the “I AM THAT I AM”. And yet, no matter how meek a person may be, the world will consider this as arrogance and conceit. They will not recognize your authority. Apostles are not only sent to confront the world, but the church in its present state. Unmasking all their categories, hypocrisy and pretence. The Apostle will not let man get away without knowing the implication of the fact that the God of heaven and all things created, is also the Lord of heaven and earth. His Kingdom now! On earth as it is in heaven.

This speaking has eternal purpose and effect. This speaking affects generations and changes history. It turns the world upside down. And those who hear them speak will be held accountable for eternity as well. There is a deep sense, a knowing that they are one with God. They speak with conviction. They live from their conviction and they will die for their conviction. Sold out to God to the point of saying, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” This faith is Apostolic in that as sons and daughters of God it transcends time which enforces the powers of the air to take note. As the evil spirits said, “Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you?” (Acts 19: 15 KJV)

The Apostle has an eschatological view, an end time view. They have an apocalyptic conviction that is backed up with the power of God, as seen by the Apostles in the book of Acts. In these last days we will once again return to the book of Acts in reality. It will no longer be read as history, but as our own personal journals. Not just for instruction in power and authority, but in how to live where we will have all things in common. If you are unable to give all that you have while it is still going well, how will you be able to do so when you stand the chance of starving to death?

We are not to adjust Paul’s apocalyptic view to our modern day standards and conditions, but we are to adjust to his. We are walking in the footprints of the early church. No longer reading about

persecution, but experiencing persecution ourselves. We will pursue men knowing the terror of God. Resurrection life demonstrated! Art Katz says, “Religion can be practiced without God, but not a glorious church!”

3.

Israel and the Church in God's End Time Purpose

The Apostle is concerned for the Kingdom of God. It is no longer a general term, but a question of His rule and reign established in heaven and on earth. Ultimately Jesus will return as judge to rule and reign forever more. This is God's glorious conclusion and it is cosmic. Jesus is ultimately returning this time as the Son of Man and the Son of God. But deeply seated in the heart of the apostle is an unquenchable love for the church and for Israel. He considers the church his joy and the fruit of his labour. They are his crown to lay before his Lord. The same love that reached out and saved him from destruction has apprehended him to now reach out and save others as well. He is apprehended by the love of God. Peter was called for Israel and Paul never lost sight of his kinsman as well, even though he was called for the gentile church. Both apostles were perfectly balanced in God's end time view for the two becoming one. Paul even wished himself accursed if only his kinsman would repent and know the salvation of God.

Before I write further on this subject, I would just like to make a disclaimer. First of all, I am not a Zionist or Kabbalist. Secondly, I am well aware that what is seen in the media does not portray the cruelty and atrocities done by Israel to the countries surrounding them as fair or necessary truthful. In truth, most countries are to a degree guilty of what they accuse others of. However, we have to understand that God has indeed chosen Israel from where He will one day rule and reign through His Son. They will indeed see the One whom they have pierced and turn to Him. When the apostles received their "sending orders" they were told to first start in Jerusalem, and then to go to Samaria and the outer parts. The first focus was Jerusalem. It was because of Jerusalem where the Christian Jews or Messianic Jews were persecuted and fled to the different parts of the world that resulted in the worldwide spread of the Gospel. These were Jews. They may have been reborn, but they remained Jews. If you are an American and are reborn, you are an American Christian. If you are Jewish, you become a Jewish Christian. This is your nationality. There really is nothing you can do about it apart from moving and changing your passport. However, Jews, no matter where they go, remain Jewish. We have to have the right understanding of who was grafted in where. As gentile Christians, we are the wild olive branches. We have been grafted into the Olive Branch, which is Israel. This does not make us Jewish, but because we are grafted in, we share in the covenant promises and favor of God. Paul says the following in Romans 11.

11 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

² God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture says of Elias? How he makes intercession to God against Israel saying,

³ Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

⁴ But what says the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

⁵ Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

⁶ And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

⁷ What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

⁸ (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

⁹ And David says, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them:

¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

¹¹ I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

¹² Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?

¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

¹⁴ If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

¹⁵ For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

¹⁶ For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷ And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

¹⁸ Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bear not the root, but the root thee.

¹⁹ Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.

²⁰ Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

²² Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

²³ And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

²⁴ For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

²⁵ For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

²⁶ And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

²⁷ For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

²⁸ As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.

²⁹ For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

³⁰ For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

³¹ Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

³² For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

³³ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

³⁴ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?

³⁵ Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

³⁶ For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

The issue of Israel and the Gentile church is the issue of unbelief and faith. This is why a true Israelite is called those who are of the seed of Abraham, which is by faith. God is only interested in one thing – FAITH. We as gentiles are grafted in by grace, through faith. However, the Lord always intended for them to be saved. He came for them, but because of their unbelief, we as the gentiles, through faith are grafted in so that we may partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree. They are the natural branches and the Gentiles are the wild olive branches.

We read in Isaiah 65: 1(KJV)

I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

We have to understand that Israel has always been His first choice. His covenant with her is eternal, hence the reason why a new covenant will be made with her, because they could not uphold the old. But He will once again come and this time write the covenant on the tablets of their hearts.

We as the Gentile Bride, already experience the wonder of this working of the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul states in Romans 11:15 the following:

¹⁵ For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

¹⁶ For I would not, brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

Romans 11: 26 – 29 helps us to understand that God is not finished with Israel.

²⁶ And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

²⁷ For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

²⁸ As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes.

²⁹ For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

We have to grasp the fact that just like Israel's rejection of the gospel through their unbelief meant our salvation, so also our belief in the gospel will be for Israel's salvation. Howbeit, unfortunately many have seen this as a yearly trip to Israel, partaking in their feasts or even becoming Hebraic in our traditions. God through His amazing grace has saved many Jews. But somehow we feel that this is for those few chosen by God to reach out to the poor souls. We, as the Church has lost complete sight of the mandate given to us, which is to provoke them to jealousy. But with not even much research, you will find that we are the goyim to them. Not a term of endearment or just another term for non-Jew, but rather seen as non-believers. To them, we are outside of the faith and we are like a cancer infiltrating their country. Art Katz was told by Jews that Hitler's aim was to kill their bodies, but his aim was to kill their souls! They hated him. They may show some respect to our wanting to reach out, but we fail to see that the same spirit that was in Paul, which was Saul, is in them that persecuted the Christians and killed them. God has established a means by which we will reach them, and it is not by making "nice" with them. It will be an ultimate requirement. Romans 11: 30 – 32 gives us the means.

³⁰ For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

³¹ Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

³² For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Israel, will soon experience total destruction. It has been determined by prophecy that as of her 70th Birthday, she will be surrounded and not one stone will be left upon another (Psalm 90: 10 (KJV)). God has determined this judgment upon her so that in her flight, she may once again call out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. My question to the Church is this: Where will she find Him when she is scattered all over the world? Who will show her mercy when it is out of her bows the laws have come to kill all those who are not adhering to their laws? Those of them who do not follow after the kabbalist or Zionist thinking, will be ruthlessly persecuted. The power that be who will still be ruling for a time, will implement these very laws, which came from them. But God has chosen a remnant that will flee into the desert. This will not only be during the trumpet judgments where the two witnesses and 144 000 virgins will look after her and feed her, but in the preceding years during the seals, right after her destruction, she will be scattered all over the world. Who will then reach out to her? Will the left behind Church who withered away in their lukewarmness be able to stand their aloofness or antagonism towards the Gospel even care about them? It is not as if they will say, "Please tell me about your God." No, this is a terribly stubborn nation who has prided themselves with being vital in all the accomplishments of this world, from arts to technology, to Commerce etc. They will not be easily won over, not even in total destruction.

God says that it is through our mercy that she will obtain mercy. It is a known fact that many shelters and hiding places have already been prepared by those who have escaped the wrath of God. The Corrie Ten Booms of this generation will once again lay their lives down for the people of God. We have to be careful not to look past those whom God has elected to be saved to those who He outright rejects because of their adultery and idolatry as Jews...those who are of the synagogue of satan. There is yet a remnant He has kept aside and they will be scattered until they return to Zion when He comes and establishes His covenant with them again.

Ultimately, we know that once the time of the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, is the very start of their time, Jacob's trouble. But the ground has to be prepared. The fallow ground of their hearts

must be broken up so that God can rain down His mercy and righteousness upon them and they can be saved. The harvest workers during this time, will not only be bringing many souls to salvation, but will also play a very vital role in the ultimate purpose of God, which is to establish His reign in Jerusalem. As apostles they will prepare the way as John the Baptist. They will be the Elijah Company which must come before the Messiah. Whatever foundation is laid, will be to this ultimate end. His Kingdom on earth from Jerusalem.

At this juncture I have to be completely honest. I have always been of those who thought of Israel as God's chosen nation and that we are to provoke them to jealousy, but felt no conviction ever about it. It was always a nice idea for those who may one day come into contact with Jews, but seeing that I never did, I thought it in some strange way not applicable to me as a believer. Even after listening for 12 years to my mentor, Art Katz, who was Messianic Jew, I still did not take it to heart or see my role I was to play in it. For me, I had no role. But I was wrong. After 12 years of listening, one evening whilst I was fasting about something completely different, He gave me a small millisecond of a peek under the veil. I saw a very small part of His love for her. Israel. I did not ask for it, neither did I seek it. But He showed me. I am forever changed. From that day on, I could not hear the word Israel without bursting into tears. I cannot explain it. It's not that I had any love for them, or even a particular reverence. I was impartial. But now, in just seeing one small part of His love for her, I cannot call it anything else, but that my heart bleeds. I can explain many things. But this is outside my range. In truth, just as the Jews received a veil over their understanding that they could not believe until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, in the same way I believe the Gentile Church is also veiled. This is a mystery. So much so that when Paul caught unto this he burst into worship in the middle of his explanation in the last verses of Romans 11.

³³O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

³⁴For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?

³⁵Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

³⁶For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Paul was not seeking to end his description with some worship, but this is a man overtaken by God's grand cosmic design, seeing with apostolic seeing.

I believe that the veil of the eyes of the Church will be opened divinely by those Apostles He has prepared, that those who are chosen to work in these last days, may indeed be the ones to extend mercy to those who did not obtain mercy.

When we look at the story of Ruth and Naomi, we find that Ruth, resembling the Church, shows pity on Naomi and her circumstances. They have to go to Canaan through a desert and finally Naomi tells Ruth and Orpah that they could go back to where they came from. However, Ruth told her, "Where you go, I go. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God." The Jews celebrate this story as a virtuous gentile woman that converted to Judaism. But she resembles the Church who married Christ, who is Boaz in this story. The essence of the story is that Ruth declared her devotion to Naomi, which is a type and shadow of Israel. In a way, we can look at her betrothal to Boaz as the grafting in of the wild olive into the Olive Tree. Her aim was not to look for a husband, a benefit she did receive however and also falls in the lineage of David, therefore also Jesus Christ. But her main focus was the provision for Naomi in a time where she had nothing. For me this resembles Israel in these last days where they will become dependent on the Gentile Church to show mercy in a time of great need. Boaz was a near kinsman of Naomi, but Ruth became His wife. There are two focus points in this book. The provision of Israel from a Gentile and the betrothal of the Gentile to an Israelite. In her working and toiling for Naomi, He has made provision for food and protection. But none of this would have happened unless Ruth's love and devotion brought her to forsake all for Naomi. She loved Naomi dearly. In these last days there will be a Ruth Company that will show mercy to Naomi, Israel, in her greatest need. For this, the veil has to be lifted so that they may be filled with His love for them. Who can explain this love God has for Israel. It is an election and not out of anything they have done. He has chosen to love them, but their rejection of Him, has brought great judgment and tribulation upon them. Yet, they will become a nation of Kings and Priests that will teach all nations the way of the Lord.

The Church will not come into its full purpose and intentions of God, independent of the nation of Israel. Likewise neither will Israel independent of the Church – Art Katz.

We see in John 21 Jesus waiting for Peter on the shore preparing a meal for the disciples. Peter is asked three times whether he loves the Lord and then is asked to feed His sheep. Who is the sheep of God? When we read John 10 we see Jesus referring to Israel as His sheep and that those who are not of this flock are also His sheep, referring to the Gentiles who will come to believe. Peter is asked to feed Israel. In fact, the Jews were Peter's main focus. But Peter, after hearing that he

will die a martyr's death, asked Jesus about John. Jesus tells Peter that it has nothing to do with him if John stays to the end. Peter, meaning little rock, is the Church that during the opening of the seals, will be feeding the sheep. John resembles the 144 000 that will remain until the end.

Having said all this, we have to understand that the moment we come to the place of understanding that the true Church's mandate is to provoke Israel to jealousy in order for the Kingdom of God to be established, the enemy will see it as his main purpose and goal to attack viciously. The gloves will come off. Now you are no longer concerned for that which is earthly, but that which is eternal. So is he, because his hatred for the Jews has always sprouted from the fact that he knew that this is God's land from where He will rule and reign forever more. Proclaiming himself as God in the temple is more than just blasphemy. He has always been blasphemous and a liar. However, this is to say that not only has he taken residence in the bodies (the temples) of those who have taken the mark, but also to say that he has taken the physical and spiritual place of dominion, which is in Jerusalem. This trumps everything. This is the ultimate for him. To declare himself as God from where God will one day rule.

Art Katz says that the church is set in the context of an enormous cosmic struggle and it started with Acts and it will find its fulfillment at the fullness of the Gentiles. The Church has an eternal purpose, which is not just to get to heaven. There is a big picture we have to see and be apprehended with. The Church focus will turn to the corporate. The Apostles are called to address and confront the establishments from which these principalities and powers have received their worship. Be it through Planned Parenting, or the education system, or politics. Whatever it may be, God has intended that we will supplant them in their offices. They do not like this at all. This will not be by the means of financial revival or the right people in politics. This may be a result of it, but not the means. The means will be the Church taking up her mandate to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth, by the authority and power given by the Spirit of God to those who obey Him. It will be through those who love not their lives unto death. It will be through those who are truly devoted and walk by faith in complete dependence on the Spirit of God in every situation, moment by moment. They will be the ones, sent by God to lead His sheep, whether Gentile or Jew, on the highway of holiness. This is the only way to God, which is through Christ, by His blood. But as we have discussed authenticity and truth corresponding with the written Word of God is the only thing that the powers and principalities recognize. It is also the only thing God recognizes. These are the ones who will lay their lives down for the Kingdom of God. Only a Church who is not afraid to suffer or die, will lay their lives down. They will praise God in the midst of their severest suffering, like Paul and Silas after having been tortured and flesh stripped

from their backs, worshipping God in jail. Alas, to those the earth will shake and tremble and the prison door will open. Hallelujah! For them, it is a privilege to suffer for Christ and even more so to die for Him. These are the Stephens, the Pauls, the Peters and James' that whilst on earth, were not citizens of the earth, but had their conversation in heaven. Even as Stephen whilst being stoned saw the Son of Man standing next to the throne of God, so these will too see Him in His majesty and power, even whilst dying a cruel death. Death has no power over them.

Conclusion

He is still the God of Israel that told them to choose between life and death. The time to choose life is upon us. This life He has promised us is called life in abundance. But this can only be achieved through faith. To come to that ultimate place of true faith is the real issue. God has to thoroughly deal with all our categories. And He wants to. He has to bring us to the end of ourselves in order for Him to work through us unhindered. He has no favourites, but He is aware of those who are willing to go all the way and pull out the stops.

We all will be held accountable for what we have done in this body, whether good or bad. We will all be held accountable for every idle word that comes out of our mouths. We will all account for our talents and what we taught others. Those who are sinners and still relish their sin, will stand before Him in great fear and trembling. Those who gave up their lives for Him will receive a great reward. There is precious little time left. The time is here where some will have to literally die. This is why this book is not just for the sake of holy living, but unless you have dealt with all these things, these things will prevent you from giving up your life when you have to choose. How will you then have the strength and love for God in the midst of such great fear and intimidation? It is true, that we cannot predict how God will extend His mercy to some to be able to make the right decision in those moments, but some because of their lukewarmness, will not have the character to sustain such bravery. Now is the time to repent and seek God. Now is the time to lay your life down.

HARVEST WORKERS

God has prepared harvest workers, prophets and apostles for this end time to help the left behind Church in her greatest need. I end this book, with a word I received from the Lord for the harvest workers.

TO THE HARVEST WORKERS:

I know what I have worked in you, what I have invested in you. I have meticulously cleansed and prepared my vessels. The vessel is filled to the brim, ready for my wine to be poured out. Trust that those whom I chose, I equipped. Trust that as My vessel, you are to surrender and walk in the knowing that we are one. I will never forsake you. I will be with you through every trial. In prison, in heartache, in persecution, yea, even in death. For did I not say that nothing will separate you from My love? Nothing. For I am in you. Walk in the knowing that we are one. The just shall live by faith. There is no other way, but to trust and obey. I will never leave you. Those I have chosen, I will fill and their cup will truly overflow for the world to drink, until my vessels have emptied themselves, as I have done.

Come, follow Me. Take up your cross.

Do not fear what man can do to you. Fear God and all will be well. I am the Good Shepherd. I will never leave My flock. Remember, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. And you will overcome them by the word of your testimony and the blood of the Lamb. And this is that which overcomes this world, even your faith. Only believe.

By the stripes of persecution, by the blows of fists, by the arrows of poison, My life will shine through you, to the doubting Thomas who will have to pierce their fingers in the side of My Body. Only that which is raised from the dead will raise the dead, My resurrection life in you. But to what end? For My glory.

Arise, shine, for the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

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