

The background of the cover is a photograph of a vast landscape. The sky is filled with large, billowing white and grey clouds, suggesting a storm or a dramatic weather system. In the distance, a range of mountains or hills is visible under a hazy, light-colored sky. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and whites, with some darker tones in the lower part of the image.

JESUS, THE MEGA HELPER

WILLIAM R. HUNT

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By William R. Hunt

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Read the Word

The Holy Spirit instructed Timothy through Paul. That instruction gives us insight into the value of the Old Testament. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith . . .” (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul and Timothy had only the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul stated that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Jesus placed great emphasis on Scripture: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” He also said, “. . . Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). I urge you to read the Word.

Early Church Life

“These all continued with one accord” (Acts 1:14). *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* explains: “with one mind, with one accord, with one passion.” The disciples were not manipulating one another or seeking a high position. There was no jealousy among them. There was no church boss. There was no music boss. What had taken place in these people’s lives? They all had one thing in common—their life-changing encounters with the risen Jesus Christ. Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up,” which changed his life (Isaiah 6:1-8). In the book of Acts, the disciples had two easily identifiable priorities: prayer and the Scriptures (Acts 6:4). By God’s record, prayer and the Scriptures are important. What are *your* priorities?

One Accord

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6b). The Bible says that there was no leaven among those who “. . . continued in one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14a). When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were *still* in one accord, resulting in their being filled with the Holy Ghost. That day, the Holy Spirit touched the lives of seventeen tribes or nations through those who were in one accord. Through the writer of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit said, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). A study of John Wesley’s ministry reveals similar results to those seen on the day of Pentecost. There is no question that this could be repeated today.

Truth Brings Healing

“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 4:24). Peter and John had just told their fellow believers about going to the temple at the hour of prayer. A man lame from birth was carried to the temple gate where he begged (Acts 3:2). He asked Peter and John for help. Through faith in the name of Jesus, the beggar was healed. His ankle bones received strength, and he began leaping, walking, and praising God. Then, Peter preached Christ and His resurrection. Because of this, Peter and John were arrested and jailed, but not before five thousand men believed (Acts 4:4). Rejoice! Oh, the power of the gospel! “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Results of Unity

In Acts 4:24, the apostles were praising the Lord “in one accord.” In verses 29 and 30, they prayed that God would heal people, and that signs and wonders might be done by the name of the holy child Jesus. In Acts 5:12, we read that the apostles were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch, and many signs and wonders were wrought among the people by their hands. Verses 14-16 report more believers being “added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Multitudes came from the cities around Jerusalem, bringing sick folks and people vexed with unclean spirits, and everyone was healed. But the religious people of that day—the high priests and Sadducees—were filled with indignation. The apostles were beaten and informed that they should no longer speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40). Many early Christians paid high costs for praying and preaching.

The Word of God

It is written that “. . . man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). The Word of God reveals God’s descent to earth, faithfulness, grace, holiness, impartiality, stability, truth, unity, wisdom, kingdom, and remedy for man’s sin and transgression through His Word. God’s Word claims that God has knowledge and control of the earth, the sea, the clouds, the gates of hell, the doors of the shadow of death, the place where light dwells, the treasures of the snow, the treasures of the hail, and the stars Pleiades, Mazzaroth, and Arcturus (Job 38 and 39). Jesus also demonstrated many of these truths during His earthly ministry. The Word of God is unshakable, unchangeable, unwavering, steadfast, and dependable. How much time are you spending in the Word of God?

Pleasing Christ

The following Scriptures are self-explanatory and beneficial for Christians who want to please Christ. “If a man love me, he will keep my words,” said Jesus (John 14:23b). “. . . Without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another” (John 13:35). “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things . . .” (John 14:26). “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). “. . . If ye continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32).

Choices

God created man with the ability to make choices. Eve chose to listen to Satan rather than to God. Adam chose to listen to Eve rather than to God. Cain chose to kill his brother Abel rather than listen to God. Ten of the twelve Israelites who went into Canaan to spy out the land chose to believe their eyes and emotions rather than listen to God. Achan made a choice for the monetary things of this world rather than for the things of God. God chose the consequences for each of the above, which were not enjoyable or pleasant for them and others of their generation. All of the above accounts are found in Genesis, Exodus, and Joshua. God recorded them for our benefit. Glory!! It is written that “. . . man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4).

So Great a Salvation

The Holy Spirit tells of a great salvation first spoken of by the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 2:3). Why call it “so GREAT a SALVATION”? It changes people’s lives and goals. Example 1: It changed a man into a great prayer warrior who once controlled a whole county. If he told a man to leave the county, that man left the county. Example 2: It made a man a passionate preacher for Christ Jesus who was once a drug dealer both in and out of prison. Example 3: It changed a lady into a soul winner for Christ who had previously been a high-class prostitute. Example 4: It changed an alcoholic into a preacher and soul-winner for Christ. This “so great salvation” changes a person. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17b). GLORY, GLORY!!!

God Knew

“For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul” (Acts 27:23, 24a). Paul was going through a very troubling and dark time. To the world, his situation looked hopeless. This passage reveals great lessons of comfort for us. 1. God was keenly aware of Paul’s fears. 2. God knew Paul’s location. 3. God knew the plans He had for Paul. 4. God knew each person in Paul’s company. 5. God gave Paul comfort at the right time. God has the same concern for you. But can we say with Paul, “. . . I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: . . . and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness” (Philippians 3:8, 9a)?

A Prayer for the Reader

Heavenly Father, I, the writer, come to You with a request in the name of Jesus (John 15:16). I need wisdom from above to be able to convince men to give up the pleasures of sin, which are temporal; to choose the great salvation available through the death and resurrection of Christ; and to be willing to suffer affliction with the people of God (temporary, but with a promise from God of eternal life). Father, help each reader understand how horrible it is to reject God's mercy and grace and offer of eternal life. Father, Jesus was radical in His teaching about anything that can cause a person to miss heaven and end up where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-48). Father, give each reader wisdom on being fruitful in Your harvest field. (John 15:1-8).

Andrew

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). If we could ask Jesus if He would like to have more Andrews (brother of Peter), I believe Jesus would say yes. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When John pointed out Christ as the Lamb of God, Andrew immediately wanted to be in the presence of Jesus. Jesus welcomed him. Andrew’s first act as a disciple was to bring his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:40, 41). When the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, they went to Philip, but Philip went to Andrew. It was Andrew who took Philip and the Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20-22). There is no indication that Andrew was bothered by playing second fiddle to his brother Peter. It was Andrew who told Jesus about the lad with five loaves and two fishes. (John 6:8, 9). Lord, raise up more Andrews!

Grace, Then Obedience

When every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:5-8). Grace was available for all but was rejected by all except Noah. God's grace and Noah's obedience took Noah through God's judgment of all life on earth except that which was in the ark Noah built. PLEASE NOTE: GOD'S GRACE WAS RECEIVED BEFORE NOAH OBEYED. Noah did not work on the ark because of legalism. Church grace does not bring about obedience. God's grace always brings love and obedience. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is a gift that opens the door to many benefits: forgiveness, spiritual blessings, adoption, acceptance in the Beloved (Jesus), wisdom and prudence, peace with God, and more of God's love (Ephesians 1:1-8).

The Grace Noah Found

The Book of Genesis reveals many great Biblical truths. In it, God reveals that disobedience brings His judgment. God's Word reveals that He has a remedy for disobedience and sin. The book of Hebrews is an excellent commentary on these subjects. Let us focus first on one subject: the grace that Noah found in the eyes of the LORD. Scripture gives us the means of this grace—"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9b). It reveals the greatness of God's grace—this is the first hope given to man after Adam sinned: God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). That promise was kept! "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b).

Relationship Goals

The church places great emphasis on doctrine. I have nothing against doctrine, but what did Christ emphasize most? He said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Why did He make that statement? He answered the question near the end of His earthly mission. His goal is an intimate relationship with those who are saved. He compares this relationship to a vine and its branches. The vine and the branch have the same nature and the same purpose. Jesus prayed twice that He be found in the saved (John 17:23, 26). In Ephesians 3:19, Paul prayed for the saved to be filled with all the fullness of God. 2 Peter speaks of being partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Dear reader, pray that Peter’s prayer for all the fullness of God may also be answered for you.

The Steps of God's Plan

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The goodness of God is seen clearly in the Son of man who came “. . . to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). When a person says yes to God's plan for salvation, that is the first step of God's overall plan for man. The relationship at this stage is like dating. The second step of total surrender is more like engagement. We will see the third step completed in heaven. “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7). Here we get a glimpse of the type of relationship God planned when He staked His reputation on having a relationship with man that will stand despite any difficult circumstances.

Reconciliation Request

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). The word “come” carries the idea of invitation from the speaker; it conveys a desire for a relationship with the hearer. The speaker is initiating a reasonable reconciliation. The initiator is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This search for reconciliation began in the Garden of Eden when God asked Adam, “Where art thou?” after Adam had sinned. The search has not stopped, for it is written “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And WHOSOEVER will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17, emphasis added). Salvation cannot be purchased—it is given freely!

Some Do Not Follow

God said, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Is this verse in harmony with New Testament teaching? Jesus tells us about ten virgins. Five were wise, and five were foolish. Apparently, the five foolish virgins did not seek God with their whole hearts: thus they were shut out from God’s presence (Matthew 25:1-13). Jesus said, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; . . . Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). He referred to those who weren’t seeking God with their whole hearts.

Prescription for Seekers

God said, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). What should a person do who has “very little, if any, desire for God, but wants to miss hell”? 1) Be honest with God, and tell Him you have very little desire for God. 2) Pray this simple, short prayer every day: “Lord, give me a desire for You.” 3) Read the New Testament for three to seven minutes each day. Some suggested passages are as follows: Colossians chapter 1, Ephesians chapters 1 and 2, Hebrews chapters 1, 2, and 11, St. John chapters 1, 3, 11, and 15. 4) Another simple prayer would be as follows: “Lord, direct me to the church You want me to attend once a month.”

You Are Invited

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). This is the greatest and most inclusive invitation ever given. The eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is inviting all people to come to the throne of grace to find mercy, grace, and help in time of need. To receive an invitation from the head of any nation is a great honor. But no head of any nation has ever offered an invitation to *all* people regardless of race, social standing, religious background, educational achievement, or mental capacity. The Lord’s invitation is an invitation for all to come boldly. The word “boldly” carries the idea of coming in confidence simply and without fear. He will receive whosoever comes.

God Knows Where You Are

The Apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:9). Still, God knew where John was, and why he was there. On the Lord's Day, the Lord said to John, "I have a job for you. I want you to write to the seven churches. I'll tell you what to write" (paraphrased). God knows where you are, too. In St. John 21, we read about Peter and some other disciples out in a boat, and they were discouraged. Jesus was sitting on the shore, waiting to feast with them. Jesus wants your attention, too. Remember—sometimes Christ has a job for you, and sometimes He wants to feast with you. Always have a mind open to either, for there is a great pleasure in both when Jesus calls.

Desire

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:4a). Today, the broader church does not have this same desire. Instead, it is plagued with people who desire and seek after pleasure, money, fame, and power, and they love the praises of men more than the praise of God. That was not the case for the writer of this Psalm. He had only one desire after which he would seek. His desire was not earthly, but heavenly, and of the Lord. It was like a pearl of great value. His desire was worth pursuing. It has eternal value that will never diminish nor fade away. Why such a desire? Answer: “to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”

God's Third Dimension

God sits on His throne and rules the world. The world sees God as only two-dimensional—nothing but dos and don'ts. But they are wrong. God has a third dimension—benevolence. All three are in harmony with one another. There is a perfect balance between the three. The world's view of a two-dimensional God springs from that third dimension. When God finished His creation of man, God sat back and said, "WOW—it is very good!" But soon a thief came to destroy that creation by perverting and debasing what was good. God wasn't caught by surprise, though; due to His benevolence, He had developed a plan before the foundation of world (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 17:8). God's plan was for mercy, grace, and truth to step into the world and restore what had been perverted and debased through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:1-13).

God Hates Divorce

In Malachi 2:16a, we read, “For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away.” In other words, God said, “I hate divorce.” Yet God does not hate the divorcee. In the New Testament, we see Jesus reaching out to a woman of Samaria who had had five husbands. When she met Jesus, she was living with a man she had not married—that is fornication. WHY DOES GOD HATE DIVORCE? It is the first cancer cell in forming dysfunctional families, which leads to fornication, the destruction of the morals of a nation, and the ultimate demise of that nation. God knows the devastation that divorce brings to the family and eventually to the whole nation. God’s Word is our instruction book for peaceful living, which comes by death to our own will and all that Satan perverted in the garden when he deceived Eve (1 Timothy 2:14).

Lessons in Samaria

“For the Son of man [Jesus] is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). John 4:4 says, “And he [Jesus] must go through Samaria.” Why the “must”? The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. 1) God’s benevolence has no boundaries. 2) Some of the Samaritans had been looking and waiting for the Messiah. They knew He would tell them all things (John 4:29). 3) The benevolence of God always reveals Christ. Jesus revealed a hidden mystery from Samaritans when He said to the woman, “I am the Messiah.” This woman had been married to five men, and was now living with a man she had not married. 4) God’s love has no boundaries, but reaches out to those rejected by God’s people. 5) Jesus knew the woman of Samaria would tell others that the Messiah had revealed Himself to her. 6) God may use whomever He chooses as messengers (John 4:1-44.)

Used of God

“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” (1 Corinthians 1:27). The shepherds announced the birth of Christ to Judea (Luke 2:15-17). In that day, fishermen were viewed as unlearned and ignorant, yet God used them to display His power (Acts 4:10-13). An extremely strong man was possessed by a legion of devils until Jesus cast them out. Jesus then told the man to go tell his friends in Decapolis the great things He had done for him (Mark 5:19, 20). To reveal His resurrection to His disciples, Jesus sent the woman out of whom He had cast seven devils (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:16-18). Even today, God uses people like the above “to seek and to save that which was lost” by pointing them to Christ the Saviour.

God Is . . .

When going through a time of darkness; when surrounded by the dark clouds of doubt, fear, discouragement, and questions; and when the birds of the soul have quit singing and the chirping of the night sounds have become silent, there are four anchor points one must remember. 1) God is always SOVEREIGN whether one is on the mountaintop or down in the dark valley. 2) God is always GOOD. God can take the worst of life's "lemons" and turn them into sweet lemonade. 3) God is WISE. His wisdom surpasses all the thoughts and imaginations of man. 4) God is FAITHFUL. Great is His faithfulness to all generations. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." (Outline from the sermon "Loving God" by Dr. Phil Brown of God's Bible School.)

Foundation Stones

It has been requested that I write about good coming out of life's thorns, pain, and discouragement. In His Word, God has given us some "foundation stones" about Himself. God is sovereign, good, wise, and faithful whether we believe or understand any of those characteristics or not. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). The Lord God said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11b). God finds no pleasure in men killing or hurting each other. God is good. He gave each person a free will. The pain, the heartache, and the cry of "It is finished!" from Christ at Calvary opened the door to safety for every person who chooses to totally surrender himself and follow Christ, whatever circumstances life may bring.

They Lacked Love

Though I speak with the tongues of men; though I have the gift of prophecy; though I understand all mysteries and knowledge, have all faith, give all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, it profits me nothing if I lack love. I am like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. I am nothing. God's Word says we need God's sacrificial love. This love suffers long, thinks no evil, is not easily provoked, rejoices in truth, is kind, rejoices not in iniquity, and endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13 is one example of the Holy Spirit's teaching. This problem church had missed the two greatest commandments—to love the Lord with all their hearts, and their neighbors as themselves (Matthew 22:37-40). **Make those two great commandments your top priority for life.**

Acts vs. Corinth—Part 1

Let's contrast the church in Acts and the church of First Corinthians. The Acts church was unified—in one accord (Acts 1:14). The Corinthian church was selfish and full of contention (1 Corinthians 1:11). The Acts church spoke in several tongues to over twelve different nations. Those who heard were edified because they heard in their own languages about the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). The Corinthian church spoke in an unknown tongue to edify themselves (1 Corinthians 14:4). The Acts church sold their possessions for the needs of others (Acts 4:34, 35). The Corinthian church was settling their disputes by going to the law. (1 Corinthians 6:6-7). The Holy Spirit was working with both churches—in Acts, to reach out to others; in the Corinthian church, to show them there was a more excellent way—love (1 Corinthians 12:31).

Acts vs. Corinth—Part 2

Both the Acts church and the Corinthian church consisted of the same kind of men in the beginning. They were position-seekers (Mark 10:20-37). There was strife among the apostles (Luke 22:24). In First Corinthians, the Holy Spirit through Paul wrote to the church, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (3:3) The Holy Spirit pointed the Corinthian church to a more excellent way—God’s love (1 Corinthians 13). The Acts church was in one accord (Acts 1:14). Why the difference? The men in Acts had seen the crucifixion, the risen Saviour, and the ascension of Christ. They had experienced God’s love toward all mankind at Calvary. Not so with the Corinthian church. “Public prostitution formed a considerable part of the other religions in Corinth” (Adam Clarke).

Acts vs. Corinth—Part 3

Jesus established clearly and distinctly that there are two fatherhoods in this world. One of those fatherhoods is the God who sent His only begotten Son Jesus to die for the sins of the world. The other father is the devil (John 8:44). Jesus called His disciples in the Acts church “my brethren” (Matthew 28:10). Through Paul’s writings, the Holy Spirit called the Corinthian church members “brethren” (1 Corinthians 1:10 and 26). Scripture establishes that the members of the Acts church were believers before Pentecost. The Corinthians were also Christians, even though there was envying, strife, and division among them. The Holy Spirit through Paul revealed their need for a second benefit (2 Corinthians 1:15). The road map to the second benefit is the truth contained in God’s Word.

Second Benefit

The Holy Spirit spoke through Paul in First Corinthians about the selfishness of the Corinthians. He pointed them toward chapter thirteen. In Second Corinthians, He told them they needed a second benefit. Some characteristics of the second benefit are as follows: 1) a willingness to put others first (2 Corinthians 1:6); 2) a total confidence in God (1:10, 12); 3) triumph in Christ (2:14); 4) the love of God which constrains us or is an unnatural force of love for others (5:14); and 5) sufficiency in God (3:5). For God's glory and benefit to others, Paul suffered "stripes above measure," five times received thirty-nine stripes from Jews, was beaten three times with rods, and was stoned once (2 Corinthians 11:23-26). These "light afflictions," though, are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Glory!!!

In His Image

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26a). It might be that as God made man, He said to Himself, “Adam, I am making you such that you will reproduce My image and likeness. I am going to fill you with My love and My grace, but you’re going to violate My word, causing Me to die to redeem you and open a door for your reproduction. Adam, there is coming a day when your descendants will become power-hungry and entangled in their doctrines, causing division among themselves. They will forget they were created in My image and likeness so that I could fill them with My love and grace, and be joined together in them.” Dear reader, no matter your doctrine, nationality, or age, if you are in Christ and Christ is in you, you are my brother or sister!

Love Demonstrated

God's love suffers long, is kind, does not envy, vaunts not itself, is not jealous or puffed up, does not show vainglory, exhibits good behavior, is not selfish, is not easily provoked, does not think evil, rejoices not in iniquity, rejoices in truth, bears all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). God purified people's hearts at Pentecost. Later, He purified the hearts of some Gentiles (Acts 15:9). In the church of Acts, we see the attributes of God's love. The people were of one accord, not jealous of each other. They were not provoked when placed in jail. They rejoiced by lifting their voices in one accord to praise God (Acts 4:24). They were kind and not selfish (Acts 4:34, 35).

More Love to Thee

It is rewarding to inflame your love for the Lord Jesus. Here are a few helpful suggestions. 1) Make a self-sacrificial commitment to delight in Christ and His passions. 2) Read your Bible slowly and prayerfully, asking God to reveal His truth. 3) Read Scripture whether you understand it or not. Then it will be hidden in your heart for later. 4) When God speaks to you through a verse, mark it and date it. It is yours now *and* later. 5) Take time to thank and praise God for each person who has helped you draw closer to Him. 6) Ask the blessed Holy Spirit to walk through every chamber of your heart, and cleanse what is displeasing. 7) Tell others often what God has done for you. 8) Seek God's will for the present. 9) For future encouragement, record answers to your prayers. 10) Set aside time to pray that God will help you learn to be always content with Him.

Spiritual Growth

There are no limits or boundaries for those who desire spiritual growth. The question is, are we cultivating habits conducive to spiritual growth? The five foolish virgins apparently became spiritually content. They did not get to go be with the Lord. The door was shut, and they heard the words, “I know you not” (Matthew 25:10-12). On Judgment Day, many will call Jesus “Lord, Lord,” and tell of their labors only to hear the words, “I never knew you: depart from me” (Matthew 7:22, 23). Could it be they were too busy working to cultivate habits conducive to spiritual growth? The vine and branches mentioned in John 15 teach spiritual growth. The Bible teaches that Jesus came to rescue us that we might be one with Christ, and glorify the Father.

Victory Over Thorns

The Wesleyan Holiness Church of Nampa, Idaho, boasts some beautiful thorny rosebushes. They are surrounded by thorns that endeavor to keep people away from the beautiful flowers. The thorny rosebush reminds me of Christ, the Rose of Sharon. Satan has placed thorns to keep people away from Christ: the thorns of pride, covetousness, selfishness, love of pleasure, and creation. Satan's desire is for people to be lovers of thorns more than lovers of God. Satan lost the battle at the cross. The victory march started at the empty tomb. The victory march ends with the marriage of the Lamb and His supper with His bride (Revelations 19:7-9). Have you joined the victory march? If not, join now. "If we [you] confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Essential Faith

The essentials for a happy Christian life include faith—“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). The Bible gives us examples of what faith does in a man’s life. Abel worshiped God by faith (Hebrews 11:4). As we see with Cain, not all worship is pleasing to God. By faith, Noah built for God. By faith, Noah became heir of the righteousness. Noah obeyed and built an ark 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. There is no record that God spoke to Noah again until after the ark was finished, approximately 100 to 120 years later. Faith results in action or work. By faith, Abraham waited on God. By faith, Daniel prayed after being forbidden to do so by the king’s decree (Daniel 6:11-13).

Faith in Action

Faith for salvation is the need of every person on earth. This faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus displayed God’s mercy to the helpless and hopeless as He entered Jericho. A blind man who knew the Scriptures cried out, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” This blind man was helpless and had no hope until he cried out to Jesus. After Jesus asked him what he wanted, Jesus showed mercy by saying to the blind man, “Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee” (Luke 18:42). God’s salvation is a gift of grace. We are saved through faith. It is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

The Price of Blessing

What price did the people pay for Jesus to bless them and feed them? (John 6:5-13; Mark 6:34-44) There were maybe around fifteen thousand people present that day—five thousand men plus women and children. God's blessing to the people cost the men *obedience*. The men all had to sit down in groups of fifty or one hundred. It cost the disciples *patience* as they seated the men. The young lad paid the ultimate price, though. He gave *all he had*. There is no record that he grumbled, complained, or hesitated about giving to Jesus. A spirit like his is always blessed by God, and is a blessing to others. After Abraham freely gave Isaac to God, God said, "Abraham, all the nations shall be blessed because you obeyed Me" (Genesis 22:15-18).

Knowing Christ

We have seen, handled with our hands, and fellowshiped with the Father and His only begotten Son Christ Jesus, who was manifested to us (1 John 1:1-3). The Bible records that many *know* about God, but do not have a personal relationship with God resulting in fellowship with Him. Christ addresses this problem more than once in Matthew. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? . . . and done many wonderful works? . . . I never knew you” (Matthew 7:22, 23). Jesus also describes ten virgins, five of whom were foolish. In the end, the door was shut, and the five foolish were left out. They heard this from Jesus, “. . . I know you not” (Matthew 25:12). The good news is that we can have an intimate relationship with Christ. The Bible is clear about this! “And hereby we do know that we know him [Jesus]” (1 John 2:3a).

Knowing God

The Bible records that many know *about* God, while others know God and have an intimate relationship with Him. How intimate? Jesus said, “I am the vine. Those who have an intimate relationship with Me are the branches” (John 15:1-7). The branches receive life from the vine. They have the same nature as the vine. Jesus’ nature was to do His Father’s will, and obey His voice. John said that our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Christ Jesus (1 John 1:3). To have fellowship with another is to have things in common. To maintain fellowship with God is to walk in the light (1 John 1:6, 7). Peter and Paul both confirmed what John wrote: we can be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), and have “. . . Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). The “hope of glory” is eternal life with Christ.

Giving without Loving

“Nevertheless I [Christ] have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Revelation 2:4). The people addressed here had become zealous in church work and doctrine. Their labor and patience were commendable. They hated evil. They knew the Word of God. They did not tolerate false teachers. Everything they were doing was legitimate. But they had allowed legitimate church work to rob them of their first love for Christ. Please notice that these people gave to the church through works. They set a great example of choosing between right and wrong. We should learn from this. You can give without loving Christ, but you can’t love Christ without giving. Be careful not to substitute giving for loving Christ. Jesus said, “I am the vine. Those who have an intimate relationship with Me are the branches” (John 15:1-7).

Zacchaeus

Think of the rich rewards of seeing and being present when Jesus comes by! Zacchaeus longed to see Jesus. He was chief among tax collectors (the IRS of his day). He was rich. Jesus was making His last trip through Jericho. The crowd stood shoulder to shoulder, and there was more than one row of people. Zacchaeus, a short man, couldn't see Jesus. He ran ahead of the crowd, and climbed up a sycamore tree. When Jesus came by, He saw Zacchaeus. He said, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5b). I wonder how Zacchaeus felt when he realized Jesus knew his name and his heart. Later, Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9b). Many today cannot see Jesus; they see only other people. To receive salvation, we must get above people or anything else that hinders us from seeing Jesus.

Surrender

“They [Israel] . . . chose that in which I [God] delighted not” (Isaiah 66:4). Are you in such a group? I hope not! Let’s be like this: “. . . To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15). In his prayer, King David said, “I know also, my God, that thou . . . hast pleasure in uprightness” (1 Chronicles 29:17a). Study the lives of the following people. These chose what God delighted in—Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, and Isaiah. A study of their stories shows they lived lives surrendered to God by faith. A good place to start is Hebrews 11.

Faith Like Noah's

Faith is man's only ticket to acceptance from Christ. "But without faith it is impossible to please him" (Hebrews 11:6a). Faith believes God's Word without evidence. Noah is a great example to all men. God told Noah, "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die" (Genesis 6:17). Not one drop of rain had ever fallen. God gave Noah a blueprint for building the ark. By faith, Noah prepared this ark to the saving of his house (Hebrews 11:7). **God kept His word.** The earth was flooded. All flesh died except Noah, his wife, their three sons, their wives, and the animals in the ark. "There hath not failed one word of all his good promise" (1 Kings 8:56b). **God keeps His word.**

Son of Man

There are many reasons why Christ left the splendor and glory of heaven to be born of a virgin. God wanted man to know that He loves every person. Christ became poor—“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). Christ was rejected—He came unto His own people, but they received Him not (John 1:11). Christ was not handsome—it is written that “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2b). But the wise and rich came and worshiped Him. They gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). Many today are like Pilate who said, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” Over the last two thousand years, many people have joined the ranks of wise men. Have you? This is the day to join!

He Came to Me

As a sinner, I had nothing that God needed, nor do I have anything now that He needs. Instead, He desires my heart to be totally surrendered to Him, which is reasonable. He invites me to come boldly to His throne of grace, that I may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). What a Saviour! Before the foundations of the world, He chose me to be holy. He also accepted me and chose me to be adopted into His family. He came to me personally at the intersection of Belmont and Peery Streets, and made Himself known when I had no desire for Him or His church. I am grateful He continued coming to me until I surrendered to Him and accepted Christ as my Savior and King. He chose you, too. Have you fully surrendered to Christ?

Christ, Our Brother

The Lord's Day is a very special day. On the first day of the week, Christ rose from the grave to pardon mankind, and accepted them in the Beloved, to bless them with all spiritual blessings, and call them "brethren." Christ did not call His apostles brethren until after He rose from the grave. Psalm 22:22 prophesied that He would call them brethren. The same privilege is available to whosoever will follow Jesus Christ, making Him Saviour, Lord, King, and the cry of their hearts. But before any of this could take place, another prophecy had to be fulfilled. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14b). He (Immanuel) was to come out of Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:2). HALLELUJAH!

Loving-kindness

Psalm 107 was written to show the love and kindness of the Lord. It is displayed through His mercy which endures forever. Four times Israel wandered away from the Lord. Four times they cried unto the Lord in their time of trouble, and God delivered them (v. 6), saved them (v. 13), and brought them out of their distresses (vv. 13, 28). We learn from this that God is a God of more than second chances because of His loving-kindness. We see God's loving-kindness and mercy immediately after Adam and Eve sinned. It was God who initiated reconciliation with Adam and Eve. God has not changed. He is still seeking to reconcile sinners to Himself. One purpose of Bethlehem was Emmanuel's desire to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

Why He Came

God had many purposes for the laying aside of Christ's glory, and becoming a Baby born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem: 1) to seek and save the lost, 2) to destroy the works of the devil, 3) to finish the plan of salvation, 4) to send the Comforter, 5) to demonstrate the kindness and love of God, 6) to reveal to mankind the relationship God desires to have with mankind, 7) to be the sacrificial Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world, and 8) to fill men with all the fullness of God. God also desires sinners know that He is Friend and Saviour (Matthew 11:19) to all who wholly follow Christ – GLORY!!

1) Luke 19:10; 2) 1 John 3:8; 3) John 19:30; 4) John 15:26; 5) John 3:16; 6) John 15:5; 7) John 1:29; and 8) Ephesians 3:19.

Help for Seekers of Salvation

What does Jesus offer to ALL people?

Answer: Forgiveness from sins

To be saved, you must acknowledge that you are a sinner. You must believe you are created by God and have enough faith to believe God's Word. Forgiveness is for "who-soever" shall confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in his heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead. The Bible says *that* person "shall be saved" (Romans 10:9). St. John confirmed this when he said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "Whosoever believeth in him [Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:15). The gospel of Jesus Christ is for you!

What does Jesus have to offer to the world?

Answer: Removal of sin

If a person travels straight north until he reaches the North Pole and then he keeps moving, he will begin going south. If a person travels straight east, though, he can continue indefinitely, never meeting the west. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). God will “subdue our iniquities” and cast all our sins “into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19b). God said, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). Not only does God remove sin and remember it no more, but God also said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

What must I do to receive God's salvation?

Answer: Believe that God will forgive you of your sins when you ask Him.

Reader, you, too, can be saved and have a personal relationship with Christ. Here is a suggested prayer. "Lord, I know I am a sinner and need to be saved. Lord, I know Jesus arose from the dead and that His blood was shed for my sins. Lord, I'm asking You to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me. Lord, help me grow in Jesus and develop a love for Your Word. Lord, above everything, help me to keep my eyes focused on You and not on people. Lord, Your Word has confirmed that You would save me; I believe You *have* saved me. Please give me a witness from Your Spirit to my spirit that I am Your child. By faith I believe Your Word; still, my faith is weak. Lord, increase my faith. Amen."

Name and Date: _____

Scriptures for Times of Doubt

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

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

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

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

“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” (Romans 8:35-39).

“. . . Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20).

Scriptures for Times of Doubt

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

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

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Scriptures for Times of Doubt

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

“And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:37-39).

“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah” (Psalm 46:11).

“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Psalm 18:2).

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears” (Psalm 18:6).

“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock” (Psalm 27:5).

