

# *What Have We Really Lost?*

*“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”  
Luke 19:10KJV*

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# **INTRODUCTION**

This small booklet will by no means expound upon all that mankind has lost because of sin. But we pray that it can be used to stir a desire within your heart to have a passionate hunger for communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.

We live in a world that has become very man-centered. This spirit of the age has boldly walked into the church leaving behind a trail of humanism and deception. But in the midst of this evil conspiracy, there is a call from heaven, a gathering unto the Person of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is looking for a bride for the Son of God. Grace is abounding to bring a people into a fresh intimate relationship with a Person, Jesus Christ.

As you read each chapter, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. Allow Him to reveal to you what has really been lost in your walk with God. Do you really have a desire to be the radiant bride of Jesus Christ? Are you really walking in the Spirit in your daily life? Have you lost the joy of the blessed hope? These and other questions will comfort you, but not without hope.

Allow grace to stir within your heart. Allow the Holy Spirit to stir boldness and courage that you might say with Paul, **“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.”** (Philippians 3:13, 14)

Jesus Christ has come to restore that which has really been lost, the communion and fellowship that God desires and deserves. God is looking for people who will give Him a place of honor in their hearts and will allow His son to live in and through them. Allow Him the place of which He alone is worthy.

## Chapter One

# What Have We Really Lost?

***“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10KJV)***

Jesus speaks very clearly in this scripture concerning His mission *“to seek and to save that, which was lost.”* I wonder if we understand “what we have really lost.”

As we read this scripture, we find Jesus in Jericho, on His way to the cross. On His way to the cross, He chooses to go through Jericho where we see Him open the eyes of the blind and save the tax collector, Zacchaeus.

We read in Luke 18:35-43, where Jesus healed a blind man as He *went into* Jericho. As Jesus *approached* Jericho, this blind man cried out to Him, and Jesus opened his eyes. In verse 43 it says **“he immediately received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God.”**

Then in Mark 10:46-52, as Jesus went out of Jericho, He heard the cry of blind Bartimaeus, and He opened his eyes. In verse 52, it says **“and he immediately received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”**

Between the healing of these blind men, we find Jesus in Jericho. **(Luke 19:1-10)** Jesus was here for a reason; He came on a mission to get Zacchaeus who was lost. Jesus, on His way to the cross, not only took the time to heal the blind on *either side* of Jericho, but went into the very *center* of the city to save Zacchaeus.

### Jesus Wants to Come to Your Jericho

Take a moment and look at Jericho before Jesus came to visit. Jericho, which means *“place of fragrance,”* had a blind man on the highway *going into* the city, another blind man on the highway *going out* of the city and a greedy tax collector in the *middle* of the city. Jericho, *“the place of fragrance”* had at best a stench of blindness and lostness, until Jesus came.

Now, as Jesus *leaves* Jericho, there is a sweet fragrance of salvation and deliverance. Now, on both sides and in the center of the city, Jericho would never be the same. The blind are no longer blind and the lost are no longer lost. Those *“walls”* of Jericho have been penetrated once again, but this time by the Son of man, Jesus Christ. Jesus told us why all this was possible when He said, *“the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

As you read this message, you too have a Jericho, “a place of fragrance.” Have you allowed the Son of man to penetrate your Jericho walls? Have you allowed Him to open your eyes and save your soul, that you might follow Him as these men did?

If you are reading this, and you are truly born again, you understand the change of “fragrance” that came to Jericho that day. You understand what becoming fragrant with the sweetness of His presence means. You can appreciate the “fragrance of the bride” spoken about in the Song of Solomon; *“filled with the Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley, the fragrance of the apple tree among the trees of the wood, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant.”* Why this change? Why now this sweetness? Because Jesus came to your Jericho *“to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

## That Which Was Lost

I want you to notice very carefully what Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save *'the'* lost." That's not what it says, is it? But that is how we read it most of the time. Jesus said, "to seek and to save *'that'* which was lost." Now we know that Jesus came to save the lost. But why? Was it only to save lost mankind from hell? Or did He redeem lost mankind so that "*that which was lost*" could be restored?

What had been lost? What had been lost that God would send His only Son "*to seek out and to save?*" The word "*to seek*" means *an intense action and attitude toward recovery*. The words "*to save*" mean *the ability to restore that which has been sought out, to make whole*. Why this intensity on the part of Christ "*to seek*" and "*to save*"? What did He come to restore? What had really been lost?

We would have to go back to the fall of man, the Garden of Eden to find "*that which was lost.*" If we were to look in the garden before the fall, before Adam and Eve sinned, we would find that God was accustomed to coming to the garden at any time to commune and fellowship with His creation. But when Adam and Eve sinned, God came to the garden as before and *couldn't* find Adam and Eve. God cried out to Adam. "**Where art thou?**" (Genesis 3:9) "**Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord.**" (Genesis 3:8) Why? Adam said, "**I heard thou voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.**" (Genesis 3:10) Adam and Eve had sinned, so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves an apron and then hid themselves from God. *The communion and the intimacy had been lost*. God could no longer just simply come to the garden and have sweet fellowship and communion with man. Man was hiding behind the trees from a *loving father* who desired their company. Can you imagine how the heart of God must have been hurt. The intimacy is lost and God is crying out, "*Where art thou?*"

## What Has the Enemy Stolen?

We live in a society that does not understand what we have really lost, what the enemy has stolen. That same deception has walked boldly into the church. We hear a lot today concerning "*recovering what the devil has stolen,*" "*restoring what the cankerworm and the palmerworm has eaten.*" Most of this recovery and restoration is centered around material blessings, and healing and comforts in one's daily life. It speaks of a God that almost guarantees these *blessings* to be a part of *modern Christianity*. Listen, I believe with all my heart that God can and will bless and heal and set free. I thank God for all that we are able to enjoy in this life.

But what about those who truly love the Lord and are not healed, and are not comfortable, and do not have the material "*blessings*". What about the 12-year old girl in Pakistan who was beaten severely by her employer. She was working as a housekeeper to supplement her father's income of 100 dollars a year, working 12-hours a day, 6 days a week. She was a Christian and refused to learn scriptures from the Koran, so they beat her severely. When her mother discovered what had happened, she confronted the employer. The mother was soaked with gas and set on fire and died. The oldest daughter went into shock when she heard what had happened and died of a *broken heart*. Yet, the father and the 12-year old girl are serving and loving the Lord with a joy that defies the enemy.

I wonder if Jesus has forgotten to “*save that which was lost*” in these lives. Could it be that God is requiring these and many others to live their Christian lives without “*that which has been lost.*” I don’t think so. I believe what the enemy stole was restored in these lives long before this tragedy. These and many like them have a fellowship and a communion with a living Christ daily in their garden. They still have time in their daily lives to spend with Him. God knows He is free to come at any time and find them desiring His fellowship. What the enemy stole has been recovered in their lives. The tragedy only made the communion sweeter.

Jesus has saved “*that which was lost*” in these lives. They have a desire to spend quality time in the “*garden*” in communion and fellowship with Him. Their Jericho has become a “*fragrance*” that testifies that spending time in His presence brings the only true joy and contentment.

### **Jericho And The Spirit Of This Age**

As you read this message, multitudes are still hiding behind the trees in the garden with an apron of fig leaves. They are strangers to that secret place of communion. Many know *about* God but have no personal fellowship and communion *with* God. Many are hid behind their careers or their religion; while others are hid behind their habits or besetting sins. The “*spirit of the age*” has consumed their lives. God has become a “*fixture*” in their lives along with all their other activities. At best, he is “*fitted in*” as a conscious soother to insure Him that He has not been forgotten. Jericho has all the “*blessings,*” but without the time or desire to truly spend with the “*blessor.*” The trees and the fig leaves have all changed, but the hearts are the same. Men are blind to the living Christ who walks among them through the power of the Holy Spirit. They have been blinded by the “*spirit of this age*” to that man in heaven who is still seeking and saving “*that which was really lost.*”

### **Jesus Is Still On A Mission**

**“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** (John 3:16) God has sent His Son to mankind to restore that life, that communion. As you read this, He is on a mission through the power of the Holy Spirit to restore many *places of fragrance*. **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”** (Titus 2:11) That grace brings with it a desire and ability to “*restore that which has been lost.*” That grace will stir you with an intense desire to welcome Jesus into your daily life. Jesus came to Jericho that day on a mission. The Son of man knows the Father has sent Him “*to seek and save that which was lost.*” He has come to restore that which you lost when you chose to identify with the *world* and *religion* and *things instead of Him*. Jesus knows the heart of the Father desires to be welcomed in your garden once again. Jesus came to the garden at Jericho, the fragrance was not that of pleasant fruits. Men were hid from God. So, in Mark 10:50, as they departed Jericho, the last thing that happened was **“the blind man cast away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.”** This garment had identified him with his blindness. It was that which he had hid behind. But when Jesus called him that day, even before he could see, he came from behind his *hiding place* and came to Jesus.

Jesus is calling today. He is still calling for men to cast away their garments, to come out from what they are hiding behind. Jesus is seeking right now to restore "*all that men have lost.*" He will touch you going in, going out, and in the very center of your life, but you must cast away that garment. What are you possibly hiding behind? What has robbed you of that intimacy with Him? The bride in the Song of Solomon realized she had missed Him, and what did she say? **"I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways, I will seek Him."** (Song of Solomon 3:2) Then what happened? **"I found Him, I held Him, and would not let Him go."** (Song of Solomon 3:4) Rise now, by the grace of God, and don't let Him go. He loves you and wants to spend time alone with you. He desires to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits in fellowship with you.

Open your heart to the Person of Jesus Christ until you hear the knock at the door. Then, be zealous and repent that He might come in and sup with you and truly restore what has been lost. **"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."** (Revelations 3:21,22)

## Chapter Two

# Our Gathering Together Unto Him

## Drawn To The Person Of Jesus Christ

Paul is speaking to the body of Christ in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 concerning the day of the Lord, **“Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, not by word, not by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”**

Paul here is admonishing the church to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. He had said in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 **“Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.”** In Titus 2:13 Paul said, **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”** Our daily lives should be centered around the blessed hope of His soon return.

But I believe Paul is also saying something else *“by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (And) by our gathering together unto Him.”* I believe this gathering unto Him is more than just awaiting the sound of the trump of God when *“the dead in Christ shall rise and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.”*

Paul is speaking of a *gathering unto Him* preceding the Day of the Lord. He is speaking of the Holy Spirit drawing and gathering a Holy Remnant unto the Person of Christ; a holy calling to an intimate relationship with Jesus. Gathered unto Him preceding His return that we might say with Stephen, **“I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”** (Acts 7:5-6) There is a living person in glory, Jesus Christ, and there is a *gathering unto (Him)*.

In Revelations 3:2 there is a man standing at the door of the church, but He is not just standing, He is knocking at that door. That man is Jesus Christ; that knock is a call to intimacy, a drawing away from form and ritual, and a gathering unto the Person of Jesus Christ. *“He that hath an ear,”* let him hear that knock, that *gathering unto Him!*

Jesus was not knocking at the door of a church that was (in their own estimation) poor and weak, but rather rich and increased, but yet *Jesus draws a spiritual line*. These that He speaks to are caught up in *things about* the Lord, but not gathered to the Person of the Lord. Jesus brings forth a pure word of repentance to gather them unto Himself that they might once again *“sup with Him, and He with them.”*

## Jesus Is Standing At the Door Of His Church

There is a pure word going forth in these last days. God is raising up a Holy Remnant of ministers, a Zadok priesthood that refuse to be snared in this evil day. Their joy is not in the crowd, or the building, or the hype but rather ministering to the Person of Jesus Christ, having a love relationship with Him. **“They shall come near to Me to minister unto Me; they shall enter into My holy place and they shall come near to My table to minister unto Me.”** (Ezekiel 44:15-16) God will use them to knock at the door of His church and gather unto Him a Holy Bride.

God will have pastors who will stand before their flock with a pure word from God. These pastors will cry out to God that the sheep become intimate with the great

shepherd. They will stand between the porch and altar for their congregation so that the wolves of deception are not allowed in.

There will be ministers who cannot be bought with price or honor. Preachers, who have allowed God to bring them through the crucible and mold them on the potter's wheel, will not be ashamed nor afraid to preach the word of God with Holy Ghost conviction.

Their calling is from heaven, and they will guard it with prayer. Their message will be sharp enough to cut through all the spiritual phrases and emotional hype; yet, filled with the love and mercy of God to gather unto Jesus a people in love with Him.

We are living in the last days. Jesus is looking for men, women, boys and girls that will count the cost and be gathered unto Him. Jesus said in Luke 11:23 **“He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.”** *Scattereth* means to put to flight, to dissipate. Those who are not gathered unto Him will fall away from Him. Once again the line is drawn.

Paul draws this same line in 2 Thessalonians 2. In verse 1, where he speaks about *our gathering unto Him* but in verse 3, he says there will also be a falling away. That falling away is not from the church but rather from *“the faith,”* the intimacy. For Jesus Himself said, *“when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”* Preceding the coming of the Lord there will at the same time be *a gathering unto Him and a falling away from Him.*

Right now, in the hour we live, there is a great drawing of the Holy Spirit to *be gathered unto Jesus.* But, at the same time, there is an evil conspiracy to pull you away from your intimacy with Christ.

Child of God, when was the last time you really had sweet communion with Jesus? When was the last time your heart was full of joy because you had been alone with Him as He had brought you into His chambers? How long since you experienced the sweet drawing of His presence to run after Him and rejoice in His love?

Our enemy (*Satan*) is not overly concerned at how much time you spend in church or ministering, or even in prayer (*although you should be diligent in these*). But He is very concerned with how much quality time you spend in God's presence being transformed by His love, being gathered around His feet, humbled and broken by the power of the Spirit.

### **There Is An Evil Conspiracy To Draw You Away From Him**

Satan is doing everything in his power to draw you away from the feet of Jesus. He will use every means to get you excited about anything other than the Person of Jesus Christ. He will even use *the things of God* to keep you satisfied without ever really experiencing the presence of God.

You see, too many times the church has related emotions and a feel good feeling, with the presence of God. But without disregarding these totally, the real presence of God is where the child of God is changed, where bondage and chains fall away, not just an emotional high. In His presence, our hearts are being made pure, that we might have His characteristics in *everyday life*, not just within the sanctuary when everything is at a fever pitch.

This is the very thing that Satan fears, that your heart would yearn for God's presence. He wants you to be excited about anything (music, programs, etc) as long as your real joy is not being *gathered unto the Person of Jesus Christ.*

As Paul wrote to the young pastor, Timothy, he warned him of this very thing. He said to him, **“Know also that in the last days perilous times shall come.”** (2 Timothy 3:1)

He is speaking here again of those days just preceding the rapture of the church, those days when there is *a gathering together unto Him*, and he is now telling us that those days would be perilous.

What exactly did Paul mean? *Perilous* here means dangerous and difficult. The word *times* indicates a specific period with individual opportunities. Paul was simply saying to Timothy that, in the last days, there would be many opportunities for each individual to experience a dangerous and difficult time.

What kind of dangerous or difficult opportunities? The word *perilous* more specifically means *the reducing of strength*.

As the Holy Spirit *gathers together a holy bride unto Jesus*, Satan will endeavor to snare and entrap individuals. Paul relates this to Timothy just before he addresses the perilous times.

**“In the hope that God may grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may come to their senses (and) escape out of the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, (henceforth) to do God’s will.”** (2 Timothy 2:25B-26 Amplified) **“They also that seek after my life lay snares for me.”** (Psalms 38:12) Satan endeavors to entrap and ensnare individuals and hold them captive that they might not do the will of God in their lives. He seeks after the real life of God in those that have tasted the Lord. He does this by seizing every opportunity to reduce or weaken your strength.

What opportunities does he look for? How does he accomplish this reduction of strength in the child of God? How will he snare the individual during this time of a gathering together unto the person of Jesus Christ? Will it be through sickness, financial difficulty, broken relationship? Yes, he does endeavor to use these to weaken you and reduce your strength.

But, I feel he seizes upon an even greater opportunity to reduce your strength. His greatest weapon in these perilous times, I believe, is to get you more excited, more joyful about *something* other than the person of Jesus Christ. He seizes individual opportunities to introduce the child of God to any thing that incites you to more action and more conversation than does your intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. It doesn’t necessarily have to be the things of the world, he will use things within the framework of the church (*music, ministry, works*), anything to draw you away from embracing with all your heart loving to be with Jesus.

### **Our Strength Is Dependant Upon Our Intimacy With Christ**

Satan realizes that if your joy is anything other than your relationship with Christ, your strength will be reduced. You will be open to be weakened in your faith and eventually snared. Why? Because **“the joy of the Lord is our strength.”** (Nehemiah 8:10) That scripture has a two fold meaning. *First*, His joy for us and, *second*, *our joy for Him*. *The joy of the Lord is our strength*, and we are weakened and reduced in strength when the Lord is not our joy, but we have become more excited about other things.

This joy in *other things* is easily detected in the child of God. You will notice it in their actions and conversations. When in conversation with an individual, when you touch on *that thing* which they like or brings them joy, their whole mood and attitude changes.

You will sense their whole level of enthusiasm rise and a stirring to converse about that which excites them. Whether it be a hobby, sports, clothes, cars, houses, menus, ministry, a talent, your job, money, shopping, relatives, how the Lord used you, whatever it might be, you will find that thing that stirs an excitement in a person.

Many are being snared with the love of other things in these last days, Many sit in church week after week deceived, not realizing Christ is on the outside knocking to get in. As there is a *gathering together unto Him*, many are being seduced and drawn away to other things.

Now listen very carefully. When your level of joy or enthusiasm is more easily stirred by anything other than your intimacy with Jesus, the results are far reaching. You will be less conscientious with respect to your sinful habits. You will be less moved with the warnings and cautious of God's word and God's counsel. You will be more careless of the conditions of your heart and its behavior pattern. You will become less fearful of the appearance of evil. You will think yourself out of *the* danger of hell, laying aside the burden of the cross life. You will save yourself from difficult duties in order to leave for yourself more time for the enjoyment of *that thing which brings you excitement*.

When, in these last days, you allow yourself to be entrapped with the snare of being excited about any one thing, more than your being drawn to the feet of Christ, you will harden your heart to the foolishness of preaching. You will not desire to hear truth preached with Holy Ghost conviction. Isaiah 59:4 says, **"Truth is fallen in the street,"** because individuals do not have an ear to hear what the spirit is saying.

When we become dull in our hearts and dull in our joy for the Lord, we lose our strength to fight, our strength to stand, our strength to persevere. Jesus said, **"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings, and ye would not!"** (and what are the results?) **"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."** (Matthew 23:37-38) Oh, that we would not miss ***the call to gather unto Him.***

### **The Remnant Will Refuse To Be Hindered**

The call to gather unto Him is going forth. As Eliezar looked for a bride for Isaac, so is the Holy Spirit gathering a bride unto Jesus. When Rebekah heeded the call to be the bride of Isaac, she responded to her relatives by saying, **"I will go."** (Genesis 24:58)

Those who will be gathered unto the person of Christ in these last days, will refuse to be hindered. They will guard against their *"Lord, Lord"* being only sounding cymbals and tinkering brass. They will not be among those **"who are ever learning, but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."** (2Timothy 3:7) Their heart's desire will be to hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ. God will fill their hearts with intimacy and communion as He gathers them unto Himself. **"O, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirst their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distress. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that we would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for his wonderful work to**

**the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”** (Psalms 107:1-9)

When the prodigal son returned home from wasting his inheritance, the father *gathered* the servants together to rejoice. He said, “*bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.*” So great was the rejoicing at *that gathering*, that the elder son drew nigh to the house, *he heard music and dancing*. There will be a great rejoicing among those in these last days who respond to the gathering unto Jesus.

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said, “*at midnight there was a cry made, behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him.*” Oh, what a *gathering* that was as the give wise virgins responded to the call. Responding to that cry meant no more sleeping, no more waiting, no more silence, but an awakening *to be gathered unto that person, Jesus Christ*.

As I pray for the congregation here in our church, I believe God for a holy desire to fill the heart of every saint, *to be gathered to an intimacy with Jesus*. Let us rise and be drawn to the feet of Jesus Christ. **“Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.”** (Psalms 106:47) God is gathering a holy remnant unto Himself these final days.

**“Our God shall come and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather my saints together unto Me.”** (Psalms 50:3-5) **“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; Let the bridegroom go forth of His chamber, and the bride out of her closet.”** (Joel 2:15-16)

I pray that you will be among those in these last days coming out of the closet. *Heed the call, respond to the knock, and be gathered unto the person of Jesus Christ. Allow Jesus Christ to be the joy of your heart once again.*

## Chapter Three

# God Has A Path To The River

***“And everything shall live whither the river cometh” (Ezekiel 47:9b)***

**“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”** (Galatians 5:16,17) As Paul writes to the church, he warns us of the conflict between the Spirit and the flesh in the child of God. It is the battle ground for the control of the believer’s daily walk.

I believe *“walking in the Spirit”* is a *privilege and responsibility* of every true believer. It should be the cry of our hearts. To walk in the Spirit means to live *habitually responsive to and controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit*. Listen to verse 16 in the Amplified: **“But I say, walk and live (habitually) in the (Holy) Spirit (responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit); then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God).”** Paul is saying, if we choose to walk in the Spirit, we will *certainly not* gratify the cravings and the desires of the flesh. We can choose to *live in response* to the Holy Spirit in our daily walk and not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

## A Springing Up

Note that Paul uses the terms *“lust of the flesh”* and *“the flesh lusteth.”* These words *“lust”* and *“lusteth”* denote activity, *a springing up*. Paul is saying that these cravings and desires that are a part of the sinful nature will become very active and begin to spring up if we do not habitually *respond* to and choose to be *controlled by* the Holy Spirit. If not checked by the Holy Spirit, they will become very active in the believer’s daily walk.

But this word *“lusteth”* in verse 17 means *a springing up towards a particular desire*. Unchecked by the Holy Spirit, *specific cravings* begin to spring up in the believer’s life and demand attention. It is out of these *springing ups* that we experience the forming of *habits* and *besetting sins* and *character flaws* that become an active part of a person’s life. These habits and besetting sins become a way of life. It is out of these habits and besetting sins and character flaws that comes discouragement. They breed lukewarmness and failure. This springing up of certain ungodly desires will demand more and more of your attention and time. What started as a seemingly innocent desire has now become a habitual craving that demands to be recognized.

## These Cravings Oppose The Word of God

This lust of the flesh that begins to spring up will begin to oppose the word of God. It will make the word become unfruitful in your life. Jesus, in the parable of the soils, calls this the ground that had thorns. **“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the**

**word, and it becometh unfruitful.**” (Mark 4:18,19) Note what Jesus said chokes the word making it unfruitful:

The cares of the world  
The deceitfulness of riches  
The *lusts* of other things

This word “*lusts*” is the same word used by Paul. Jesus is also speaking about a *springing up* of a desire of the flesh that will choke the word and make it unfruitful in your life. This *springing up* strangles and crowds out the word until you are pressed to find the room for the fruit of the word in your daily life. Your daily walk becomes filled with these *other things* and *other cares* which also have their own set of values and fruit, a *life centered around self*.

Have you ever wondered why some people can sit under the true word for so long, yet the word seems unfruitful? There seems to be very little growth and maturity. Many times it is because there is an active springing up of the flesh which is controlling their daily lives and choking out the very word that would set them free. They have not chosen by the grace of God to live and walk habitually in response to the Holy Spirit. Why do they choose to walk in the flesh rather than walk in the Spirit? Because it is easier on the natural man to feed the cravings of the flesh than it is to starve them. The only way to victory is, by the grace of God, to habitually walk in the Spirit. For Paul said, “If you walk in the Spirit, you would not fulfill this springing up of the flesh.” For “*the walking in the Spirit*” allows this river of life to flow freely again. Ezekiel said, “**Everything shall live where this river flows.**” (Ezekiel 47:9[B]) I believe this river to be a type of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the believer. It is the flood of living water that is the results of walking in the Spirit; and the Word will become fruitful again.

### **The Path To This River**

Now listen very carefully. I believe the grace of God will stir every heart that finds themselves *not walking in the Spirit*. I believe grace will stir you *to take the path* that will lead you from “walking in the flesh” to “walking in the Spirit.” God has a *path that will lead you from the cares of the world and the lusts of other things*. It is a path that will bring you right to this river of life that is filled with the Holy Spirit. It is in this place that the Holy Spirit will give you victory over this springing up of the flesh and will bring you to the fullness of a life in Christ Jesus.

As you take this path, the grace of God will begin to teach you how to walk in the Spirit. “**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**” (Titus 2:11-14) It is here, as you take this *path away from walking in the flesh* that the word becomes alive to you again. Grace will begin to spring up in your heart once again. “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in**

**psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.** (Colossians 3:16)

### **The Enemy Waits Along The Path**

But this path is not without opposition. When you choose to take this path from walking in the flesh to walking in the Spirit, *the enemy will bring his strongest opposition.* Your adversary wants to keep you weak and bound to the things that will compromise your walk with the Lord. He wants you tied to the *cares of this world* and the *deceitfulness of riches* and the *lust of other things.* The enemy does not want you to take this *path that will lead you to a river that is full of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.* So he watches and waits, *lurking in the shadows.* **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”** (I Peter 5:8) Your adversary is looking for an opportunity to deceive and ensnare you. Listen to Job 40:21,22: **“He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and ferns. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.”** I believe this is a picture of the enemy of your soul, the enemy that does not want you to take this path to the river of life. He does not want you to live a life that is habitually walking in the Spirit. He lieth under the shady trees, the reeds and the marshes conceal him. It is in these shadows and dark places that he begins to get bold and confident. Listen to verse 23 of Job 40: **“Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth (is confident) that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.”** He believes he can drink up the Jordan River, which is the river of God. *This Jordan is the symbol of the River of the Spirit* that flows from the throne of God which Ezekiel was talking about.

So the enemy watches along this path, looking for an opportunity to deceive and ensnare you. He watches and waits until just the right time to spring the trap.

There are many methods and snares that the enemy will use along this *path to victory* to stop you short of the *true river of life.* One of the first ways is to make you expect *spiritual feelings.* He will try to deceive you into thinking how much you are giving up to travel down this path. So he convinces you that *surely this path will lead you to material blessings and comfort.* So along the way he baits you with *ease and good feelings.* *You will begin to think you have escaped the enemy* and found the waters of this river of life. But instead, the enemy has *snares you once again with only the temporal and the surface, that which feeds the cravings and fleshly desires.* With all the evidences of flowing blessings, *you are stirred in your senses and your feelings.* The trap of the enemy has been sprung again. Instead of going on to walk habitually in the Spirit, you *begin to live by the blessings and the feelings,* thinking they are spiritually inspired. However, *these feelings will stop short of entering into that river of life.* Many times these *feelings* and *blessings* only bring you deeper into the soulish realm.

Another way he endeavors to ensnare you is by *causing you to think of the losses and pain you will suffer if you completely abandon this lust of the flesh.* You see, the enemy does not want you to regain your spiritual sight and discernment. The Holy Spirit has graciously come to show you this path, and the enemy moves quickly to regain the ground he is losing. *So he brings fear of how much it will cost you to go down this path.* With this fear will come criticism and disobedience. He will bombard you with distracting

thoughts and confusion as he endeavors to divert your attention, your focus. He will do and suggest anything to draw you out of this path that is leading you to this river of life.

The enemy knows that everything in this river pertaining to God will live, *so he wants you to live by your feelings*. He wants you to focus in on yourself again instead of God. *He doesn't want to lose your daily walk of the flesh and feelings and blessings, all centered around self*. He realizes *this path* that God has you on *will bring you to a walk of the Spirit*, a walk where you are *more sensitive to the heart of God* and the will of God than your own selfish cravings and desires. He knows that if you truly walk in the Spirit *your discernment will be keen to hear the voice of God* once again. You will be able to *discern the good from the evil, the light from the darkness*. He knows you will once again be *sensitive in the presence of Christ*, enjoying the communion and fellowship that comes with just knowing Him. He knows you will once again be *aware of the abiding presence of Christ and the effectual workings of the Holy Spirit in your heart*. You will begin to understand and appreciate what Peter experienced once he had walked down this path and found the river of life. **“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (1Peter 1:2-4;8) *The enemy realizes God has called you down this path*. It is here *you will become partakers of the divine nature and will escape the corruption of this worldly lust*. It is here *you will abound and will become fruitful* in your personal experience with the person of Jesus Christ. So he waits along this path that leads you to this river of life, this daily walk in the Spirit.

### **This Path Leads To Victory**

Listen to Job 40:23: **“Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up the Jordan into his mouth.”** The Jordan represents the river of God, the river of the Spirit. He arrogantly thinks he can swallow up the Jordan River, but he cannot. This is where Jesus was baptized, in the river Jordan. This is where the Spirit of God came upon Christ. This is where the path is leading you. *God is bringing you to this place where you will walk in victory*. This path has brought you to the very river of God, a river whose currents are full of the very life of Christ.

Don't let the enemy deceive and ensnare you. *Follow the path to the river where everything lives*. *God has a path marked with His grace and His mercy that will bring you back into His will for your life*. **“Teach me thy ways, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.”** (Psalms 27:11) **“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at they right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”** (Psalms 16:11) **“He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake.”** (Psalms 23:3) *Allow the Lord to lead you in His path until your feet rest in the waters of Jordan*. **“And he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a**

**thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Then he said unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live." (Ezekiel 47:3[B]-6;8,9[A]) *GOD HAS A PATH TO THIS RIVER MARKED WITH GRACE JUST FOR YOU. FOLLOW THE PATH TO THE RIVER AND LIVE!!***

## Chapter Four

# Between a Rock and a Hard Place

***"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel. They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." (Exodus 14:3)***

The miracle of Exodus 14, when God opened the Red Sea so the children of Israel could escape from Pharaoh and his army, is one of the greatest examples of God's power to deliver His children in the Word of God. Almost every child of God has read or heard this story many times. I would encourage you to read it again, even before you read the remainder of this message, and *allow the Holy Spirit to make it very real to you again.*

There is something in this story that is very common to the entire human race. No matter where you are in this life, lost or saved, you can relate to this story. There is a place in this story that every man and woman comes to in their lifetime. There are those of you who will come to this place many times. I want mainly to speak to those of you who are truly saved, for this story relates to the children of God, but you who are not serving God will understand it *quite* well.

**"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."** (Exodus 14:3) The children of Israel were brought to that place where their backs were against the wall. Many call this place, "*between the devil and the deep blue sea.*" But let us call it, "*between a rock and a hard place.*" Israel would experience exactly what this place was like. Their place was called Baal-zephon, the *Lord of Darkness.* When the Lords of Darkness would have crushed them, *God moves in a miraculous way and makes a way of escape through the Red Sea.* Not only does God make a way of escape, but He destroys the enemy as well.

## The Outstretched Hand of God

Let's look at how God performed this miracle. **"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."** (Exodus 14:13-16; 21,22) God tells Moses *to stretch out his hand* over the Red Sea, and a way of escape will be made.

Listen, many times *we want God to speak that way again.* When we find ourselves "*between that rock and a hard place,*" *we want God to stretch out his hand* so that we can miraculously move forward. At that *moment of despair and fear, when we feel overwhelmed and shut in with no where to go,* we just hope that God will make a way where seemingly there is no way. It might be a place where it is hard physically or spiritually, or it might be finances or a

relationship. But no matter what it might be, you just wish you could get a miracle like Israel did. *You wish God in heaven would just lift His hand and part your Red Sea.*

## **God Has Offered More Than Just His Hand**

I believe God *can* and *still does* part those Red Seas in our lives. But I believe there is something possibly *even greater* that we can experience. Although Israel's Red Sea was parted, that generation refused to embrace the promises of God. That generation would never enter the promised land. *That same God in Heaven has given us more than just His right hand of power.*

**"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."** (John 3:16A) *God has given us His Son. He came to dwell among men on this earth.* Now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, this same Jesus can live in the hearts of men, making man his habitation.

*God has chosen to give us Himself.* He chose to live with us so *that we might know Him and know His heart.* If God had stayed in heaven, if He had not sent his Son, we would not know the heart of God as we do today. If He had not come and *walked beside men in all their circumstances and situations,* we would not be able to understand His heart the way we can now.

Listen, God has made a choice. God has *chosen not to stand at a distance and only stretch out His hand over your rock and hard place.* But *through His Son, God has chosen to come to your rock and hard place.* It is no longer just an outstretched hand, but now *God allows us to have His heart in this place.* Between the rock and that hard place, *God desires to come to us with a fresh touch of His heart and His love* that can be even more powerful than His right hand outstretched.

Too many times when we get in these tight spots, all we want is God's hand to be lifted up over our circumstances. We fail to realize just how big God really is. *God wants to get closer than His hand. He wants you to experience His heart.*

If God only lifted up His hand over your circumstances, you would only have improved circumstances. *But if you are relieved and comforted by His heart, you have had a personal encounter with Him, the Person.* You get the joy and comfort of His company in the midst of your rock and hard place.

You begin to realize that enjoying His company in the midst of that hard place is better than the good times without Him. You will begin to understand that if all the trials were gone and everything seemed outwardly bright, the brightest things cannot relieve the heart. It is only His heart that can really relieve you in this place. You will learn that His company is better than the comforts of this life. **"I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy."** (Psalms 16:8,11A)

In your *path of life,* God desires to offer you more than just His hand of deliverance. Many times he will use these tight places to *draw you* ever closer to *Himself.* God never has a problem parting Red Seas; *it is the human heart that He so patiently deals with until He has the communion He desires.* Could it be, *your rock and a hard place is just an opportunity for God to give you more of Himself?*

## A Thief In a Tight Spot

All through the Bible and all through the history of mankind, over and over again God has shown Himself in ways that man least expected it. Men have learned the true heart of God in these tight places.

Do you remember when Jesus was crucified, they hung Him between *two* thieves. The one thief would recognize who it was he was hanging beside, and he would say, "**We receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.**" (Luke 23:41,42)

What did the other thief say? "**And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.**" (Luke 23:39)

Do you see the difference? Both of these men were between a rock and a hard place. But what they desired was two different things.

The thief who said, "*save thyself and us*" just wanted to be delivered from the pain and agony of death of that cross. He wanted *someone to lift a hand over his tight spot* that he might go free.

The other thief found something altogether different on his cross. He experienced something in his *tight spot* he had never experienced before. *This man found the company of Jesus between his rock and hard place.*

As this thief hung in this tight place, he opened his heart to Jesus. He called Him, "**Jesus, Lord.**" As he opened his heart in his hard place, he heard the heart of Jesus cry out. "**Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.**" (Luke 23:34A)

As this man heard these words from Jesus, he realized what he had found. He didn't want to be free of the cross; *he wanted the assurance of this man's company.* He wanted *more than just a hand to be lifted up* to set him free. This man, as he stood between his rock and hard place,

What did Jesus say to this man in his tight spot? Be delivered from this cross? No! "**And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.**" (Luke 23:43) *A thief got more than a hand in his rock and hard place, he got the heart and abiding presence of Jesus Christ. "Thou shalt be with Me."*

## Changing More Than Your Circumstances

In John 11, we find two other *people between that rock and a hard place.* Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was dead. They simply wanted Jesus to come and speak the word or "*lift up his hand*" over this hard place.

But Jesus didn't come immediately. He tarried for two days before He came. *Jesus would do more than lift up His hand and change their circumstances.* Before Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead, *He would reveal His Heart* in a way they had not seen before.

**"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see.**" (John 11:32-34)

*Jesus would walk with these to the grave of Lazarus.* Did you hear that? Jesus, the Son of God, *is walking with these to the grave.* *They have received more than a hand lifted up, they have His company.*

What happened as they *walked with Him* to the grave? **"Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him."** (John 11:35,36) They saw the heart of Jesus as they had never seen it before.

His weeping on the way to the grave opened their eyes to see His great love for Lazarus. They received more than "*a hand lifted up,*" *they received His company and a revelation of His heart full of love.*

### **Drawn To Him In This Place**

The disciples of Jesus found themselves between this *rock and a hard place*. They were in this hard place because *Jesus sent them there*. **"And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: And when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary."** (Matthew 14:22-24)

These *disciples find themselves in the midst of the raging sea*, while *Jesus is in the mountain praying*. Jesus knew exactly what was happening. He knew before He sent them to the other side. But what did Jesus do? He could have *lifted His hand from the mountain* and caused the storm to calm. He could have *walked down the mountain* to the shore and *lifted His hand like Moses*, but He didn't.

What did Jesus do for those disciples who found themselves between a rock and a hard place? **"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."** (Matthew 14:25) Jesus chose to walk across the water to these disciples. Did He do this so that He could make it calm? No! There was *something else Jesus wanted to do in the midst of their storm*. When the disciples recognized it was Jesus, listen to what Jesus said, **"But straightway Jesus spake unto them saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And He said, Come...."**(Matthew 14:27-29A)

Jesus wanted Peter to "*come*" to Him in the midst of the storm. "*Come to Me*" and *experience my heart and my company in the midst of your rock and hard place*. These disciples would *experience much more than a hand lifted up*, they would *experience the very heart of Christ reaching out to them*.

Maybe as you read this, you too are *between that rock and a hard place*. Could it be that God is trying to show you *something even greater than His hand lifted up*. Too many times when things are going well, *we draw our enjoyment from those things around us*. Why don't you allow the grace of God to strengthen you *in the midst of your rock and hard place to draw from the joy of His presence and His company*. *Allow Him to show you His heart before you ask for His hand*.

**"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God....God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved...."** (Psalms 46:4A, 5A) *Allow those streams of His presence, His company, His heart to fill your heart as you experience this rock and hard place. Look for Him, the person, that you might know Him as never before. His heart can make you glad long before He lifts up His hand.*

## Victory In The Face Of Defeat

**“So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.”** (Numbers 25:8B)

Moses tells us a story of a young man who *stood up to darkness and won a great victory in the face of defeat*. **“And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.** (Numbers 25:6-8)

In the midst of ruin and iniquity Phinehas *rose up from weeping and prayer* to face the darkness. Because of his actions, the Lord spake unto Moses saying, **“Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.** (Numbers 25:11)

Why was there a plague among the children of Israel? Why was there ruin and darkness in the midst of the congregation? What would lead Zimri to bring that Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses and all the children of Israel?

We find our answer in the first three verses of this same chapter: **“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.** (Numbers 25:1-3)

Israel is found at Shittim committing whoredoms with the daughters of Moab, and sacrificing and bowing down to their gods. We find the root of the problem in Verse 1A, **“And Israel abode in Shittim.”** The word “*abode*” here means *to sit down quietly, to settle in*. Once again Israel is found abiding too long in the same place, until they are snared by the enemy.

A few weeks ago in our Friday night prayer service, the Lord reminded us of the great need of moving forward. I felt He spoke to my heart to share with the people to rise up in faith and move forward into areas of prayer we have never walked in.

As we read this story in Numbers, we see the failure of Israel in this very matter. Instead of progressing and moving forward, they were abiding too long in the same place. As a result, they became indifferent and insensible to their spiritual condition.

### **Spiritual Apathy Is The Breeding Ground of Ruin and Darkness**

When they *should have desired the sincere milk of the Word* that they might grow and progress, they became stagnant. *When they should have been stirring themselves to rise up and go forward*, they became relaxed. Israel stands at the very door of the land flowing with milk and honey only to allow their hearts to fail them again. This generation

has wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Over and over we see the Lord displeased with them because of their murmurings, complainings and unbelief.

God has miraculously brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, into the wilderness of discipline. It was here they could have learned those valuable lessons of daily life, lessons that would have strengthened and encouraged them to go forward. It was here their lives could have been disciplined and they could have rid themselves of that *"never quite satisfied spirit."*

Israel had wandered in the wilderness and now found themselves at Shittim. Shittim was in full view of the promised land. They were close enough to see the land that flowed with milk and honey. They stood at the very edge of the promises of God. When they pulled back one time too many, God judges this generation with disinheritance and death as He raises up a new generation to inherit the promised land.

How many times have I seen this very scene played out in the Body of Christ? God's children coming ever so close to walking in the fullness of God only to be thrown back again. *Christians refusing to press into the Kingdom of God until they are moved forward by the power of the Holy Spirit. People skirting the edges, flirting with sin until the enemy traps them. Individuals not taking commitments seriously, easily missing a Wednesday night prayer service, or not moving forward in their prayer lives.*

I have seen too many *"Christians"* get that *never quite satisfied spirit* until they commit spiritual whoredoms. Their *minds easily wander* to things other than God. Their *spiritual likes and dislikes begin to change*. They become very *unsettled*, and their Christian walk is dictated by circumstances instead of their born again experience.

These *"Christians"* *get tired of waffling back and forth, never seemingly progressing*, until they sit down quietly and settle in long enough to be snared by the enemy. *It is at this point they will find themselves eating with and bowing to the very thing they once detested.*

As a nation, we have stood in the midst of the greatest light, only to draw back into darkness and stand at the very threshold of judgment. Christians pushing for prayer to be put back in schools when they are hard pressed to be found in prayer at the family altar or for more than just a few short minutes in the personal prayer closet. We must face the darkness in the power of fervent prayer around an old-fashioned altar until God touches our soul and gives us the victory.

What were the results of Israel not moving forward at Shittim? What did spiritual apathy produce? **"And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor."** (Numbers 25:3-5)

Beloved, God loves His children, but He will never be mocked. Spiritual whoredoms will bring spiritual death. Paul warned the church at Corinth about these very things committed by Israel in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11) Paul finished that discourse with these words, **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest ye fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."** (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

## God Will Strengthen You For the Battle Ahead

It is at this point we see a great spiritual battle ensue. We see the powers of darkness endeavor to bring total defeat to the children of God. Spiritual apathy had opened the door to wickedness, and the enemy takes full advantage. We see here one of the most open, blatant attacks of Satan upon the righteousness and holiness of God. **“And behold one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”** (Numbers 25:6)

While some of the children of Israel were weeping and praying because of their sin against God, the devil uses Zimri to unashamedly bring a harlot in the sight of Moses and all those that were weeping and praying. The devil is bold with his garbage. The enemy uses Zimri to mock and discourage the children of God.

Satan will endeavor to use his Zimris in these last days. They will have no respect or regard for God’s children. They will openly flaunt their sin in the face of God and His children.

Many Zimris will bring their lust and uncommitment in the midst of the congregation. God welcomes and invites anyone to come to Him, but these Zimris will come satisfied in their sins. They will be satisfied in their rebellious state. These Zimris have no desire to hear the truth or words about commitment. You will meet them from time to time and their attitude is one that speaks of their spiritual condition as being fine. These Zimris will try to make you feel as though you are the one missing something. *“Why all this church? Why all this weeping and praying? Why all this commitment? You know The Word doesn’t have to be that straight, that hard. Look at me, I’m doing fine. Don’t let that preacher fool you. I backed away, and I have more time for my family and more time to enjoy myself. Loosen up, don’t get too involved and miss out on so much of life.”*

## But Where Sin Abounds Grace Will Much More Abound

While Zimri is boldly flaunting in the face of God and the congregation, *God will have a people who are crying out to Him. Grace will be abounding in the hearts of those who will humble themselves before God. The grace of God will give them the desire and ability to stand up to the darkness.*

Notice the spiritual position of Israel when Zimri walks in. It is one of *brokenness, humility and crying out*. The children of God recognize their great failings and acknowledge their great need for mercy and forgiveness. *Grace has given them a desire for victory in the face of defeat.*

These praying men and women are beginning to obtain boldness to stand up to the darkness, instead of quietly settling down until they are overcome again. *Those who are weeping before God refuse to compromise before man. These who are praying when Zimri comes in are ashamed of their sin but not of their God.* From this position of weeping and praying, brokenness and humility, we see Phinehas stand up to darkness and gain victory in the face of defeat. **“And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand.”** (Numbers 25:7)

Phinehas rose up from among those who were crying out to God. He stood up to darkness representing a new generation that would go into the promised land and obtain the inheritance.

*God is looking for men and women in these last days with a heart like that of Phinehas, one that will rise up in the face of darkness and defeat. God is looking for a people who will refuse to compromise or retreat from prayer until victory is gained.*

Some of you who read this today are sitting at Shittim. You can see the fullness of God from where you are, but once again, iniquity has thrown you back. It seems like you will never have the ability to walk in the fullness of God. Zimri stands before you mocking, jeering, discouraging your every prayer. But *God will strengthen you with His grace if you will only humble your heart before Him* as Phinehas and the congregation did.

Phinehas means *oracle, unquestioned wisdom and knowledge, a person of spiritual authority*. As God finds you among the congregation, broken and crying out, He will give you the wisdom to use spiritual authority in the face of your darkness. God will strengthen you with the authority to rise up from among the congregation and win a great victory in the face of defeat. **“And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.”** (Numbers 25:8)

God is looking for those who will rise up and stay the plague (the plagues of the heart, the home, the church, the nation). He is looking for those who will come from a humble position of prayer and praise so to be used of God in these last days. He is looking for men and women who will thrust the enemy with prayer and faith, children of God who will come from the prayer closet and refuse to compromise with Zimri. God is looking for those who will rise up in the midst of darkness and believe Him for a great victory. He wants servants who will have a desire to move forward from Shittim and bring glory to their God in the promised land, saints of God who will be like Phinehas, **“he was zealous for his God.”** (Numbers 25:13B)

Phinehas was zealous for his God and it affected reconciliation for the children of Israel. **“But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.** (Galatians 4:18A) It was a good thing for Phinehas to rise up in the midst of the darkness and go forward in victory.

### **Victory Awaits Those Who Will Arise in Faith**

All through the history of God's people, His true servants stood up in the midst of darkness to gain a great victory. Darkness has settled around the house of Eli. The glory had departed, the lamp of God had gone out, and God's judgment was about to fall; but God had a man in Samuel who would face the darkness. Samuel answered, **“Speak; for thy servant heareth.”** (1 Samuel 3:10B) If you will rise up in the midst of your darkness, *God will give you an ear to hear the voice of your Saviour, Jesus Christ*. Your ear will once again hear those words from the heart of One who loves you, even though He knows you.

When all Israel had fled from the face of the Philistine giant, God had a man in David who would stand up to the darkness. David said, **“Thy servant will go and fight.”** (1 Samuel 17:32B) *God is calling men and women in these last days to rise up in faith and fight the giants of doubt, unbelief and fear*. You, like David, can win a great victory in the face of defeat.

When Ahab and Jezebel ruled over Israel, one of the darkest clouds possible covered the land. In the midst of that darkness, God had a man who would rise up in the power of His might. Had there not been an Elijah in that day, the powers of darkness could have possibly held every mind in captivity and every heart in bondage. Every person would have been caught between two opinions. Elijah stood up to 850 prophets led by a furiously wicked woman named Jezebel. A great victory was won that day in the face of defeat because Elijah *rose up*.

### **The Plague in Your Heart Can Be Stayed**

God is looking for servants like Phinehas, Samuel, David, Elijah and others who will face the darkness and stay the plague. *What is that plague in your heart? What is the thing that always draws you back or stops your spiritual progress?* Has a Zimri come to discourage you and keep you from having faith to rise up and move forward?

*Jesus Christ has won the victory for you. He stood up in the midst of darkness and gained a great victory. Humble your heart today like Phinehas; cry out to God. Cling to that old rugged cross until the plague is stayed in your life. **“Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for ever more.”*** (Psalms 106:30-31)

*Praise God, there is victory in Jesus Christ in the face of defeat. There is a “sufficient grace” available to you today in the midst of the darkness. Rise up today and have faith in God. He cannot fail. He must prevail, have faith in God, have faith in God.*

## Chapter Six

# Heaven: Don't Miss It For The World

**“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13)**

As I have served the Lord for these past 21 years (and may I add they have all been with my lovely wife, Beth, who was saved 2 weeks after I was) I have often been troubled why many Christians I have known have no *real joy* in their *relationship with Christ*. There seems to be so much *surface zeal* in the place of the true *“joy of the Lord”* Why do Christians who have the *blessed privilege to commune with a resurrected Saviour who died for their sins*, find *something else* to fulfill their Christian experience and joy? Why do so few seemingly have so little interest in heaven? I still do not have all the answers, but I believe I understand the reason a little better.

Now, I realize that we, as Christians, experience trials and circumstances that can be very trying. I know there are valleys in which we must walk. There are those times that we battle with discouragement and doubts and fears. But Christianity is *not one long extended valley*. It is *one Goliath after another*. Christianity is not a continual *“digging out”* from one bad experience to another. But even if it were, *we have a living, resurrected Saviour* and the promise of the word that says, **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.”** (Romans 8:28) Thank God there are words in the Kingdom of God, such as *victory, deliverance, comfort, goodness, thankfulness, fullness, power, strengthened, inheritance, liberty, justice, freedom, resurrection, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*. Thank God there are *scriptures* like, **“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ;”** (Philippians 4:19) **“For the joy of the Lord is your strength.”** (Nehemiah 8:10b) Yet with all these words and scriptures and promises, many still find *very little consistency in their “joy of the Lord” stirring a “hope for heaven.”*

### Hope That Breeds Misery

I believe we find some of the answer in 1 Corinthians 15:19. Listen to what Paul says in this verse, **“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”** As I read this verse and meditated upon it in prayer, I saw something that, on the surface, seems impossible. But it is not impossible at all. There are two phrases here that look impossible for an individual to have said about them at the same time. It seems impossible that these two characteristics can be active in a person at the same time. Paul says man can have *“hope in Christ”* and, at the same time, be *“of all men most miserable.”* How can Paul say that an individual can have *“hope in Christ”* and yet be *“men most miserable?”* It seems to be a contradiction, an impossibility. Yet, it is the very reason many have *so little joy* in their lives as Christians. They have *“hope in Christ,”* but it only makes them *“miserable.”* They talk about hope, they talk about Jesus, but, for the most part, they are miserable. Paul said, **“There is a hope that maketh not ashamed”** (Romans 5:5), but this hope *makes one miserable*. How can this be?

This *“hope in Christ”* is *“in this life only.”* Look at the verse again, **“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”** (1 Corinthian

15:9) Men are most miserable whose *"hope in Christ"* is *"in this life only."* They have *"hope in Christ"*, but it is *"for this life only."* These are men who have *"hope in Christ"* for *things* they want to accomplish, places they want to go. Their *"hope in Christ"* is that He will help them accomplish and achieve much of that which they have set their eyes upon. They have goals and achievements they desire to be met and they have *"hope in Christ"* that He will assist them. The only problem is that most of this *"hope in Christ"* is for things *"in this life only."* A tremendous amount of *energy* and *effort* is directed at obtaining the *"good life"* here, at the expense of *losing the joyous expectation of heaven* in the life to come. *These become miserable* when this *"hope in Christ"* does not bring about the desired results in certain situation and circumstances. Their *joy*, for the most part, is dictated by their blessings or lack of *in this life*.

### **In The World And Of The World**

Jesus said about His disciples, **"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."** (John 17:16) Many today *in the church* are *in the world, of the world, and consumed* by the world. Paul said to Timothy, **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownelves....lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"** (2 Timothy 3:1, 2a, 4b) Multitudes have run to the god of pleasure, pandering to their selfish desires. They have an appetite for the world and those "things" thereof, that refuse to be left unsatisfied.

As I was preparing this message for our congregation, I had a visit from a prominent Methodist minister in our area. My wife brought him to my study where I was in the middle of this message. He told me over the past few weeks the Holy Spirit had brought to his remembrance on several occasions his first missionary trip to India. He prayed and asked the Lord if there was something He was trying to tell him. He told me that he believed the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart. The Holy Spirit reminded him how the Hindu's worship millions of gods. They worship anything from the leaves on the tree to the next person walking by and they do this *consciously*. But, the Holy Spirit said, those in America also worship millions of gods. The only difference is that Americans worship their millions of gods *unconsciously*. They *unconsciously* worship their material blessings, jobs, careers, food, entertainment, their abilities, appearances before men, sports, video games, internet, TV, the American dream, ministry and the list goes on. Paul said it a little stronger. **"For there are many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, who walk (live) as enemies of the cross of Christ (the Anointed One). They are doomed and their fate is eternal misery (perdition); their god is their stomach (their appetites, their sensuality) and they glory in their shame, siding with earthly things and being of their party."** (Philippians 3:18, 19 Amplified)

Multitudes in this hour have chosen *this world*, and the *things of this world*. Their *"hope for heaven"* has been traded in for a *hope that makes miserable*. Their reality of Christianity is *"in this life only."* The *pleasures* and *conveniences* here outweigh to them the hope of the world to come. Their *joy*, their *expectation*, their *anticipation*, their *pleasures* are found *"in this life only."* They have become very *earthly minded*. The *love of this world* has robbed them of their *"blessed hope."* Their entire lives, for the most part, are centered around *"laying up treasures on earth,"* instead of joyfully preparing for heaven. Listen to William Law writing over 200 years ago:

*And when the lusts of the flesh have had their last day, and the pride of life has only a dead body to inhabit, the soul of man which remains will know at last that it has nothing of its own, nothing that can say, "I do this", or "I possess that".*

*Then all that man has or does, will either be the glory of God manifested in him, or the power of hell in full possession of his soul.*

*The time of man's playing with words and intellect, or grasping after positions among men or of amusing himself with the foolish toys of this vain world, can last no longer, than he is able to eat and drink with the creatures of this world.*

*When the time comes that he must take his leave of earthly treasure and honors, then all the stately structures which genius, learning, and proud imaginations have painted before his own eyes or those of others must bear full witness to Solomon's "vanity of vanities, all is vanity".*

*(William Law, The Power of the Spirit)*

Listen to the Apostle John on his perspective of the world: **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust of there of: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever,"** (1 John 2:15-17)

### **A Hope That Causes Blindness**

When people who call themselves "Christians" have a "hope in Christ" that is "for this life only", something very destructive begins to happen in their spiritual walk. That hope not only makes them *miserable*, but it also *brings spiritual blindness*. The word "miserable" that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 15:19 is only used one other time in the New Testament. I believe both of these times, it is used to speak to the church of the danger and deception of this "false hope." We find this word "miserable" again as Jesus speaks: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and *knowest not* that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and *blind*, and naked." (Revelations 3:17) Here Jesus is speaking to the church. He uses the same word that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 15:19. Jesus says to those within this church that they are *miserable*. But before He tells them, He makes a profound statement. Jesus says, "And *knowest not* that thou art wretched, and *miserable*, and poor, and *blind*, and naked." Jesus says they are miserable and don't even know it.

How can a person be *miserable* and *not even know it*? Jesus tells us how. He says these Christians have also become *blind*. The word "*blind*" here comes from a word that means "*opaque*." This blindness causes things to become shady, dark and obscure. *It causes one not to see clearly or limits one's ability to be very observant.* This blindness

*causes things to be easily hidden from a person.* But it also means something else. It means to “*envelope with smoke.*” What is Jesus saying? He is simply saying that when His children have “*hope in this life only,*” with this *riches* and *increase of goods*, these “*things*” begin to act as a *smoke screen* which prevents you from seeing clearly what is beyond. When God’s children become *earthly-minded, too much about self and the temporal things of this life*, they become surrounded with a smoke screen that clouds their vision for those heavenly places. They become *miserable* and *blind* to the “*blessed hope of His appearance*” and *don’t even know it.*

## **Hope of Heaven Consumed By The Smoke**

Multitudes in the church today have had their *vision for heaven consumed.* But this is *not by happenchance; it is the very design and deception of the enemy.* It is the *deception of the enemy, the spirit of this age*, which seduces the children of God, causing them to be very earthly and worldly-minded. This is all designed to cloud their vision for those things that be of heaven. This blindness deceives its victims until they are inflated with self-conceit. They become high-minded and lifted up with pride until *the smoke slowly consumes them without the flames.*

There is an old saying that says, “*Where there is smoke, there is some fire.*” This smoke that envelopes its victims with the pleasure and profit of this world is from the devil’s fire. The enemy allows this smoke to slowly penetrate into the life of its victim until the heavenly vision and heavenly anticipation are clouded over with worldly goods and worldly pleasures. *The smoke from this fire is the “things of the world” that tarnish the “hope for heaven.”*

This is the same deception Satan used in the Garden of Eden. He offered Eve an apple for a paradise. Eve failed to realize the hook that was in the bait. *Now Satan’s apple represents the things of this world which are exchanged for the heavenly vision.* Man is still failing to see the hook that is in the bait. Man is failing to see the devil’s fire behind the smoke. Multitudes of God’s children are getting caught up in the smoke of enticing television commercials and magazine ads featuring “*the good life.*” The latest fashions modeled by macho men and seductive women are all presenting a set of false values.

We live in a high-tech generation whose lights keep shining brighter and brighter with a spirit that says, “Get all you can now.” These bright lights have moved right into the church. Drama, plays and theatrics with all the proper costumes, sound effects and high-tech lighting have filled many sanctuaries. The “**foolishness of preaching,**” (1 Corinthians 1:21) has been replaced in many pulpits with the “*foolishness of acting.*” Many preachers have substituted hours of prayer over a message with hours of practice on all the right lines. “Sinners In The Hands of An Angry God” preached by Jonathan Edwards in the 18th century has been replaced with “The Misunderstood on the Couch of the Psychologist.” Adam and Eve are still being deceived by the enemy. Paul said, “**For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**” (2 Corinthians 11:2,3) The victim may not be named Eve and the bait may not be an apple, but the enemy is still the same; and multitudes are being deceived by the smoke from his fire.

## Do You Smell Smoke?

Many may read this message and become very bothered. You may possibly write this preacher off as being very narrow. But I have prayed and asked the Lord that if there is any smoke in your life, you will begin to “smell it.” Open your heart and allow God to show you how *“that blessed hope”* has been consumed by this deception. I believe the Lord gave me three very simple examples of how this smoke may be affecting your life. Look at them and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart:

1. Have you ever been riding down the highway and someone was burning leaves in the ditch? The *smoke* had crossed the highway and you could hardly see through it. But you could see enough to know that it was not very wide, so you moved quickly through it to the other side. You were amazed *how quickly the smell of smoke got in your car and on your clothes, but it soon went away.*
2. What about that time when you were traveling and there was a forest fire close by? *The smoke had become very dense* and emergency personnel were on the scene to slow you down making sure that you proceeded with caution. This time the *smoke affected your breathing* a little, and your *vision was limited* to just a few feet ahead of the car. Eventually you broke out of the smoke, but the effects were longer lasting. Your car and clothes had that *“smell of smoke”* and it took some effort to get it out.
3. Then there is that person who woke up to a *smoke filled house*. The *smoke was very heavy* and they were having difficulty breathing. They had to find something to cover their face, hopefully a damp cloth, as they stumbled to escape with their life. Some in the house made it out on their own; others had to be rescued; while still others were *consumed by the smoke—not the fire—and lost their lives.*

Where are you today? Maybe of you are traveling down the road where the leaves are burning. There is just enough *“smoke of this world”* to bring *a few tears* to your eyes and *a little smell on your clothes.*

There may be some of you who are having to proceed with caution. The *“smoke of the world”* in your life is like the forest fire. You can see the danger all around you and it is really hindering your vision. *Your spiritual progress has been brought to a virtual standstill.*

What about you who are recognizing your *house is filled with smoke*? You look around and see this *“smoke of the world”* has *all but totally consumed your “life in Christ.”* This *smell of smoke* has affected every part of your walk. You sense the urgency to get out, but you find yourself weak and in need of help. *Your vision for those “heavenly places in Christ Jesus” has been totally consumed, and you find yourself struggling in the darkness with very little “hope.”*

## This Smoke Can Be Driven Away

This *“smoke of the world”* has affected many lives. *These worldly enticements have consumed the “blessed hope” in many hearts.*

Peter once knew what it was to “*savour those things of the world.*” Listen to what Jesus said to Peter, **“But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”** (Matthew 16:23) Peter also had the smell of this smoke in his life.

However, something happened to Peter. The power of the Holy Spirit changed Peter’s life on the day of Pentecost. *The wind of the Spirit blew the smoke away.* **“Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: Let them also that hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away...”** (Psalms 68: 1,2a) *God will arise through the power of the Holy Spirit and drive away this enemy of your soul.*

The Holy Spirit is still blowing today. Cry out to Him and allow Him to drive away this “*smoke of the world,*” this “*hope that makes miserable.*” Allow the grace of God to stir a desire to say with those in Hebrews 11 **“...And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.”** (Hebrews 11:13b-16)

Allow the Holy Spirit to blow fresh again in your life. Allow Him to bring a renewed vision to your daily walk of “*those heavenly places in Christ*” until Revelations 22:17 is a reality in your heart; **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Embrace the grace of God today with a fresh hope that cries, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”** (Revelations 22:20b) Rise up today with a fervent zeal for the Person of Jesus Christ until you can cry out with Paul, **“If then you have been raised with Christ (to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead), aim at and seek the (rich, eternal treasures) that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth. For (as far as this world is concerned) you have died, and your (new, real) life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in (the splendor of His) glory.”** (Colossians 3:1-4 Amplified)

*Heaven is real, don't miss it for this world.*

## Chapter Seven

# His Joyful Radiant Bride

**“Joyfully the radiant bride turned to Him, the one altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand to her soul, and with unconcealed eagerness to begin her life of sweet companionship with Him, she answered...(Song of Solomon 8:14[A] Amplified)**

I believe with all my heart there is a *call coming from heaven* for a people *to be the bride of Christ*. What a privilege lost humanity has to hear that call and give themselves to God until He fashions them to be the radiant bride of His Son. Paul said to the church at Corinth, **“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.** (2 Corinthians 11:2) Paul was stirred with a godly jealousy to present Christ a people that loved Him with all their hearts and desired to give themselves totally to Him. I believe Paul understood the heart of God that is expressed in the Song of Solomon when it spoke about that *joyful radiant bride*.

As you study the Song of Solomon, we see a type of the church, as she should be consumed with her love for Jesus. There is a *progression of preparation and growth* as she is fashioned to become the bride of Christ. **“Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”** (Ephesians 5:25[B]-27) This work of grace is about *the inner man, the hidden life, the longing of the heart* to have Him as your life’s love. This door of intimacy and communion is open to all that will give their hearts to Jesus Christ and allow Him to be the Lord of their lives. You can choose by the grace of God to be a *joyful radiant bride* that is *continually turning to Him* who has become the chief among ten thousand to your soul. Grace will stir you to have an unconcealed eagerness to have a life of sweet companionship with Him.

## Hearing The Call In The Daily Walk

As you open your heart to Him, He will gladly walk you through the daily process of moulding you into His bride. Let us look into this process and see how grace will develop this good work. **“(I can feel) His left hand under my head and His right hand embraces me! My beloved speaks and says to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing (of birds) has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth and ripens her green figs, and the vines are in blossom and give forth their fragrance. Arise My love, My fair one, and come away. (So I went with Him, and when we were climbing the rocky steps up the hillside, my beloved, shepherd said to me) O My dove, (while you are here) in the seclusion of the clefts in the solid rock, in the sheltered and secret place of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. (My heart was touched and I fervently sang to Him...) Joyfully the radiant bride turned to Him, the one altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand to her soul, and with unconcealed eagerness to begin her life of sweet companionship**

**with Him, she answered) make haste, my beloved and come quickly like a gazelle or a young hart (and take me to our waiting home) upon the mountain of spices!"**(Solomon2:6,10-15{A};8:14Amp)

In the midst of these verses we see the bride and the beloved. As they commune together the beloved speaks to the bride the same words on two occasions. In verses ten and thirteen He says to her, **"Arise, rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away."** The time has come for her to rise up and come away with Him. The time has come for the bride to *progress, to move forward, to come away* with Him *for* who He is. She had said to Him, **"Draw me! We will run after you!"** (Song of Solomon 1:4[A] Amplified) Now, He is calling her to come *another step closer* to being that radiant bride who would make Him the chief among ten thousand of her soul. This is *another step closer* to an unconcealed eagerness to have a life of sweet companionship. It is in the daily walk that she must respond to the call to come away with Him. But why now? Why did He want her to rise up now?

### **The Winter Is Past**

The beloved has just brought her through a very important season of her young life. It was a time He had purposed and orchestrated. It was a specific season that was designed to *prepare her to be able to heed the call to rise up* and come away with Him. We find why in verses ten and eleven. **"My beloved speaks and says to me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, behold, the winter is past..."** The beloved was saying to her *this winter* season is over. There will be others, but this one has worked its purpose. I can *call you now to rise up*, and you will heed the call. But, I first of all had to bring you through this winter.

Why was the winter important to the beloved? What did it represent in her progression and maturity in being that radiant bride? This winter season that the beloved had brought the bride through was a *time of testing* in which outwardly there seemed to be little to cheer about. There appears *very little outward manifestation of life*. The winter is a time of *temporary coldness, darkness and seemingly death*. But, it is all for a reason.

The beloved knows He must bring you through that season where the outward is temporarily removed so you can see how much you had become dependent on it. It is in these times of coldness and darkness that you discover how much of your life was consumed in those outward manifestations that are no longer there. You begin to find out just how much you were identifying with conditions that were only satisfying to the natural man. The winter season will open your eyes to see how much of your life and energy was distracted with many "things." With the outward resources removed, you discover just how much or how little of the real life of Christ dwells in the inner man. We are able in this winter season to find out the real measure of our love for Christ. Now you can really see how much or how little you have with the Lord.

But listen, something tremendous is happening in the winter season, something that only takes place during this time. The sap, *the power of life, all goes down to the roots. There is a concentration of the life and strength of the sap at the roots.* In this time of testing and darkness, when everything outwardly seems to be checked, there is *an increase within of the real power of the life of Christ.* This is the power of life hidden in the inner man that is independent of all outward and perishable things. It is in this winter

season that the hidden life is strengthened with the power of God's love. Listen to what Paul said **"May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the (Holy) Spirit (Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality.) May Christ through your faith (actually) dwell (settle down, abide, make his permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love. That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints (God's devoted people, the experience of that love what is the breadth and length and height and depth (of it); (that you may really come) to know (practically, through experience for yourselves) the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge (without experience); that you may be filled (through all your being) unto all the fullness of God (may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself!"** (Ephesians 3:16-19 Amplified) Praise God! Look at the workings of grace in the inner man in this winter season.

- *Reinforced with mighty power in the inner man*
- *Rooted deep in love*
- *Founded securely on love*
- *Strength to apprehend and grasp that love*
- *Really come to know the love of Christ*
- *Filled with all the fullness of God*
- *Filled and flooded with God Himself*

I cannot overemphasize the privilege of walking through such an experience. But I must warn you also of the importance of *embracing this privilege with a responsible, obedient heart*. Too many come to this place and refuse this work of grace. Year after year, season after season passes them by without truly embracing the opportunity. What greater privilege could be afforded us than to be moulded into the radiant bride of Christ?

### **Winter Always Precedes The Spring**

Remember, this winter season preceded the call to *"rise and come away."* Who was it that brought her through this season of grace working in the inner man? It was her beloved who saw the bride safely through these winter experiences. It was all a part of the preparation for her to be in position to hear and heed the call to *"Rise and come away with Him."* The beloved knows exactly what it takes to position us to hear the call to rise up. Did you hear that? That is how much He loves us. The beloved does not want us to miss the call to come away with Him because He so desires our fellowship and communion. Therefore, there will be many winter seasons as we progress and mature and heed His call.

But, the beloved knows that the winter is followed by the spring. Did you get that? The beloved knew the winter would be followed by *the spring and a new outburst of life*. He had used the winter to strengthen the roots in preparation for this *new spring growth*. The winter has produced strong roots that desire only to love and apprehend Him. He has been doing a *deep and silent work* that He might possess the most inward part of the heart.

It is very important that you open your heart to Him in this time He has set aside for you. For the beloved desires for the spring to bring a freshness of life. **“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing (of birds) has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth and ripens her green figs, and the vines are in blossom and give forth their fragrance. Arise My love, My fair one, and come away.”** (Song of Solomon 2:12-13) Spring has broke forth, and with it, there is a reminder to rise and come away with Him! Now there are outward manifestations springing forth. But listen, with all this outward growth, the beloved desires that it corresponds with the deep inner work of the winter. What will He do? He will now begin to deal with the outward manifestation that does not represent the workings of the winter season. He will begin to *prune away all that is not like Him*. The word will become that two-edged sword pruning away all that does not relate to the deep rooted love for Him.

This is why it is so important that you embrace your winter season. If you allow Him in the winter to strengthen the roots, you will be able to embrace the pruning. If you have become *occupied with Him in the winter* when there was very little outward manifestation, you will welcome the pruning of any new spring life that does not honor the inner work of grace. As the flowers appear and the birds start to sing, He will require it all to glorify Him.

What will be the results of this winter and spring experience if you embrace it with faith and obedience? You will have *a strong deep-rooted love that is occupied with Him*. You will be *prepared to answer the call*. Grace will stir you to *“rise up and come after Him”* as you allow Him to mould and make you into His Bride. The bride here in Song of Solomon answers the call, and so can you. **“(So I went with Him, and when we were climbing the rocky steps up the hillside, my beloved shepherd said to me)”** (Song of Solomon 2:14[A] Amplified) As she began to come after Him, notice the beloved spoke to her. She is prepared now to move forward in her maturity. She is hearing His voice clearly.

## Rest and Communion

The beloved has positioned her now for a place of rest and communion with Him. **“O My dove, (while you are here, in the seclusion of the clefts in the solid rock, in the sheltered and secret place of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”** (Song of Solomon 2:14[B] Amplified) This work of grace has brought her to the *secret place* where she is *sheltered in Him*. The communion is so precious to the beloved that He calls her *voice sweet* and her *face lovely*. The bride responds to Him **“(My heart was touched and I fervently sang to Him)”** (Song of Solomon 2:15[A] Amplified) All this is the outcome of grace working in the seasons of the bride’s life.

Will you heed the call? Will you allow Him to bring you through your seasons of life that you will desire to *fervently sing to Him* who desires to hear your voice? Will you answer the call to be that joyful radiant bride that is *continually turning to Him* who has become *the one altogether lovely to your soul*? Will you say to Him who loves you **“Make haste, my beloved, and come quickly and take me to our waiting home?”** (Song of Solomon 8:14[B] Amplified) Will you be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband? (Rev. 21:2[B]) *He loves you! He is calling today!* Answer the call and come

away. Come away from all that distracts and be that radiant bride that will bring honor and glory to the Person of Jesus Christ!

*The Beloved is calling your name  
Have you heard His voice today  
He wants you to be His bride  
Will you rise and come away*

*The seasons all come and go  
To perform His work of grace  
Will you sing to Him your song  
As He looks into your face*

*He has prepared for you a home  
A place in the heavens above  
But you must heed His call  
And give Him all your love*

*There is no greater joy  
Than to be called to be His bride  
All of heaven will stand that day  
When you stand there by His side.*