

BACK TO BETHLEHEM

10 FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

**Bible truths designed to encourage a
progressively growing intimate relationship
with the Lord Jesus Christ**

Edward Miller

BACK TO BETHLEHEM

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
Prologue.....	7
1. The Exchanged Life.....	11
2. Faith.....	23
3. Revelation.....	35
4. Rest.....	45
5. Redemptive Living.....	57
6. Fruit.....	71
7. Victory.....	83
8. Conformity with Christ.....	93
9. Union with Christ.....	103
10. The Great Commission.....	115
Epilogue.....	127
Message Outlines.....	132
Poem: “I Have Christ”	151
Notes.....	152

INTRODUCTION

This book has been created from a series of ten talks that Ed Miller gave in October 2018 at a conference in France, to a group of hungry Christians seeking an ever growing and closer relationship with Jesus Christ. They requested that he speak on what he believed to be ten foundational principles on living the Christian life. These are the ones that Ed prayerfully chose to speak on at this conference.

I have chosen to maintain, for the most part, the word by word transcription of these talks. Minor editing was used to omit redundancy and shorten long sentences. Grammar may be a bit “shaky” but it makes it easier to follow along for those who are listening to the original audio at the same time. I think Ed’s personality, dry sense of humor and interesting terms of speech shine through by endeavoring to stick to the original transcript. “What I Long to Communicate” at the beginning of each chapter has been taken from his outlines.

The title, “Back to Bethlehem” came from Ed’s former messages on the Book of Ruth. Since any foundational principle is based on the Person of Jesus, I’ve included edited excerpts from his Ruth messages as a prologue and epilogue to help explain in story/picture form why we need to be continually seeing the Lord; returning Back to Bethlehem. Hopefully the prologue will prepare the reader for the foundational principles and the epilogue will tie them all together, since the Book of Ruth contains foundational principles in story form.

Most of my life it seems like I’ve been searching for answers for why I am here in this world, a stranger in a strange place, a place where it felt like I didn’t belong. Through the Holy Spirit, this series of messages has finally revealed to me the place to find enduring peace and rest in my heart, recapturing that glorious time forty years ago when I accepted the Lord’s invitation to enter into my life. My prayer is for the Lord’s progressive revelation of Himself and His enduring rest for all who may be seeking...

~ Janet Huhn

RESOURCES

For Ed's older audio messages: www.biblestudyministriesinc.net

For the ten "Back to Bethlehem" audio messages or for more recent messages search for "Ed Miller, Bible Study Ministries" at YouTube.... www.youtube.com

Visit the "Jesus Anchored to Our Soul" Facebook page for up to date information on Ed's teachings, travel schedule, activities, etc.

For free "Back to Bethlehem" eBook (thank you John Scalzo), free PDF book download and up to date information about Ed's teachings, travel schedule, activities, etc. visit www.photosbyjanet.com/christian-blog

PROLOGUE

(Why we need to go back to Bethlehem based on the story of Ruth)

The Book of Ruth begins with Naomi's family who started off in Bethlehem (Bethlehem is translated from the Original Hebrew as "house of bread"), and because of a famine they left the House of Bread in order to go to Moab to find bread. They stayed in Moab ten years, and the record shows that it was a very difficult ten years. Naomi lost her husband, and then she lost her two sons. Finally, in the land of Moab she heard that there was blessing in the House of Bread. She heard that the Lord had visited His people in Bethlehem. So when she heard that, her heart was attracted and she began her trek back to Bethlehem.

When she came back after ten years, she said: "I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty." When she left ten years earlier she did not say, "I am leaving full." When she left ten years earlier she said, "I am leaving empty." I am leaving because there is no bread in the House of Bread. There is a famine here. But after ten years she discovered that she had left full at the beginning.

You see, Bethlehem is a picture of Christ, the House of Bread; the place of fullness. And sometimes, even though we all start out in Bethlehem, when famine comes or things get a little tough, we leave fullness (of course, we think it is emptiness) to find fullness. When you leave fullness to find fullness, you only find emptiness. God instructed this family for ten years in that truth that there is only emptiness outside the House of Bread. In the House of Bread, famine is fullness. Outside the House of Bread, abundance is poverty.

There is no fullness outside the House of Bread. Fullness is in Christ. It is not in Moab. It is not in Christian service and it is not in Christian fellowship. Those things are wonderful in their place, but they are not fullness. If you look for fullness in Christian or spiritual gifts, you will only find emptiness. If you look for fullness in scholarship and academics or even Bible knowledge, you will only find emptiness. Fullness is in Bethlehem; it is in Christ; it is in the House of Bread. Until we go back to Bethlehem, we cannot begin to have the union with our heavenly Boaz that results in the production of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to go back to Bethlehem, and that is where it all

begins.

Now, I am emphasizing the word “back” in “Back to Bethlehem”. I am making a big deal out of that because Bethlehem is a picture of Christ, a picture of fullness, a picture of abundance, and every Christian starts out where they started out in Ruth chapter one. You are already in Bethlehem. You start out in Bethlehem. Some Christians have a mistaken idea that they need something in addition to Jesus. They say, “Oh yeah, I have been saved. I have trusted Christ as my Savior, but now I need something in addition to that.”

Sometimes you hear people talk about a second blessing, “I have been saved, and I have Christ as my Savior, but now I need a second blessing or a baptism of the Holy Spirit or some additional experience. There is no second blessing but there is a rediscovery of the first blessing, and sometimes that rediscovery of the first blessing is so dramatic that you might call it a second blessing.

When you receive Christ as your Savior, God has given you His everything. He does not give you Jesus plus anything; not Jesus plus power; not Jesus plus patience, not Jesus plus love. When you receive Christ, you receive all of Christ and He is all of those things in your life. You may not enjoy all of those things but you do not need more of Christ; you need more eyesight. We need to see what we already have in Christ.

Every time a person gets saved he is in Bethlehem. He is totally blessed. If you are not enjoying fullness in Bethlehem it is not because you have not received it; it is because you left it. The Book of Ruth begins where every Christian begins; on level ground. Nobody has an advantage with God. We have Christ, and that is all we need, and sometimes we depart from that and we go off to Moab.

In Ruth 1:20&21 Naomi said, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?” Now if you have an NIV or a New American Standard Bible, you will notice in the margin for the word “Almighty” that it says “Shaddai” or “El Shaddai”. The Hebrew word for God in this translation is “El Shaddai”.

What does the word El Shaddai mean? Let me paraphrase it. It is one of the most marvelous titles of God. It is the word that means “the God who is more than enough; the all-sufficient One”. Isn’t it an

amazing thing that Elimelech and Naomi go away because God and Bethlehem were not enough? And when she comes back, she says, “I have come to know God as the God who is more than enough; the El Shaddai.” All of that suffering that God allowed in the land of Moab, all of that hardship, the tears that they faced, the graves that they had to go to, all of that was designed to show them that God is more than enough.

Sometimes we might feel like when we are away from Bethlehem, that maybe God hates us, and He has washed His hands of us, and He is just standing there with a big rod waiting to beat us because we are away from Bethlehem. But it is not that way at all. What God is doing instead is engineering our situation and our circumstances so that we will finally come to the place where we know He is enough.

When we come to the place that we call Him El Shaddai, we will come crawling back to Bethlehem. And when we come crawling back to Bethlehem, we have crawled over the threshold which is the beginning of a life that is an oasis, a life that is filled with joy and relationship and produces a Savior for the world. That is why God does that in our lives. Every forward step in your life in helplessness is a forward step in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of His Word.

The most victorious moment in any Christian’s life is the day he got saved because in that day he was nothing and Christ was everything. So the whole Christian life is nothing more than going back to what we were when we first got saved, and as we have received Christ we are to walk in Him in that same way. So, we grow backwards to the cradle.

Back to Bethlehem;
Jesus is more than enough....

1

THE EXCHANGED LIFE

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE THROUGH MY EXCHANGED LIFE MESSAGE

Jesus lived as God originally created and intended men to live. He laid aside who He was by nature (the manifestation of His Godhead), never to grasp for it or to depend upon it again. He lived every moment depending on the indwelling Life of His Father. He has invited us to that same experience. We lay aside who we are by nature (sinful flesh), never again to reach back and grasp or depend upon it. Instead, we live every moment depending on the indwelling life of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus living in us is on a quest to bring His redemption to the world. As He lived for others in His incarnate body, He now pours out His life through His mystical body, the Church, to draw sinners to Himself. We do not live for Jesus; He lives for Himself! As He once died as our Substitute, He now lives as our Substitute. The exchange is His life in place of mine.

The Indispensable Principle

I would like to begin with what I call the indispensable principle. When we come to study the Bible there are many helps. There are word studies and books of sermons and all kinds of aids but there is only one principle that is indispensable. You can't live without it. That is total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. It's God's book. Only God can reveal God. I can't reveal God. Only God can reveal God. This Bible is like the Lord Jesus. There is a human side and a divine side. Some people only get the human side. Only God can give the divine side. He promises that if we would come as little children He would reveal Christ to us. Gal. 1:15&16, "But when He who had set me apart even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood..." What was true of Paul is true of each one of us. He set you aside when you were born. In His grace He called you. Now He wants to reveal His Son in you and then He'll send you out.

I am Ed Miller and I'm a redeemed sinner and a lover of the Lord Jesus. I've set my heart to know the Lord in every way possible that a redeemed sinner can know the Lord on this side of heaven. I seek Him and I pray that you are also seeking the Lord. I wish my Lillian, my wife, could have joined me. She has an illness and is unable to travel but she promised that she will be praying for us during these days. I'm following the suggestions of our Brother Frederic to share fundamental truths. It's limiting but it's so important to have the foundations. There are so many foundations, it was not easy to choose which ones to speak on.

So, as I waited upon the Lord, I thought I would share the foundations that have most helped me. Nothing will be new. I'm sure you have heard all of this before. I pray that it will be alive and fresh. The thing that is going to make it alive and fresh is that we'll be talking about a Person. His name is Jesus. That's why we've gathered. I pray that you've come to see the Lord.

The first foundation I am calling "The Exchanged Life" and it came from a man named Hudson Taylor, a missionary to China. He was a missionary for many years before he discovered Christ as his life.

When he discovered Christ as his life he called it the “exchanged life”. The reason why I like that is because it presents Jesus as a substitute. Usually we say, “When Jesus died on the cross He was my substitute. He died in my place.” I think all true Christians know that He died in my place. But some Christians do not know that now He wants to live in my place. He wants to live as my substitute.

For years I was taught that I should live for the Lord. Then God discovered to me that He wants to live for Himself. He doesn’t want me to live for Him. He wants to live in me. It’s a wonderful reality and it changed my life. So, we’re going to be speaking about that exchange; His life in place of my life.

To do this I would like to present two great truths. We will be going back to the beginning. I want to show you Christ as the last Adam and as the second man. When we finish that, I’d like to show you what it looked like when Christ lived on earth. In order to see Christ as the last Adam I want to show you a verse that claims He is Adam. Romans 5:14, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” And also in 1 Corinthians 15:45, “So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” The Bible is careful not to call Him the second Adam. Second implies third and third implies fourth, and so on. By calling Him the last Adam, none can follow. With Jesus that picture ends.

1 Corinthians 15:47, “The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.” He is called the second man because other men will follow. That is us. In order to see this I’d like to go back to the beginning in Genesis 1:26&27, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.’”

Man was created in the image of God. Don’t read that “la, la, la”. What does that mean? One thing we know it means is that man is unique. That’s one reason in Genesis 9 that it says we can eat animals, because animals were not created in the image of God. Only man was created in the image of God; not the angels, not animals, not insects and not fish. That’s why evolution is foolish. It’s not that an animal

can adapt and become like a man. It's foolish to claim that something that is not created in God's image can become created in God's image.

I want to tell you exactly what it means that God created man in His image. Many books are written on that but God makes it clear in the Bible. We have His inspired answer about what is the image of God. Listen to these three verses. 2 Corinthians 4:3&4, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Christ, the image of God; that's simple words.

Listen to Colossians 1:15, "And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation." He is the image of the invisible God. Hebrews 1:3, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.." Jesus is the exact representation of God. The image of God is Christ. That was God's original intention. That was the divine idea. This is man as God created man to be. This is what makes man different from all other creatures. This is the heart of what it means to be human. Man was created in the image of God.

When God first created man in His image, God could look down from heaven at man and see Himself. When He saw man He would see His Son. When He saw man as He created man to be He would be pleased because man would radiate Christ. That was God's original plan, that man would reflect Christ all over the earth. You know the sad story. Adam #1 sinned. What did Adam lose when he sinned against God? I know he lost lordship/dominion. I know he lost his innocence. I know he lost the garden. I know he lost most of his brain. He doesn't think like God created man to think. But bottom line, what did he lose?

I'm suggesting that he lost the very thing that makes man a man. The thing that makes man a man, as God intended man to be, he sinned away. The Apostle Paul explains it in Ephesians 2:12, "...remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Before you were saved you were without Christ in the world.

Ephesians 4:18, "...being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart..." Man was excluded from the life of God. What in the beginning was a wonderful plan, that man would reflect Christ, has now been destroyed; that unique part, the image of God, the life of God. Are we surprised that man now lives like the animals? That's why. They are separated from what makes man a man. He fell from humanity.

I want to show you Christ as the last Adam. We begin with the Christmas story but I want to get to the heart of it. It's not the virgin birth. It's not the star in the sky. It's not the Wise Men. It's not the murder of all those little babies. It's not the shepherds. It's not the announcement by the angels. It's not the five Christmas songs that we have in the New Testament. It's not even His titles; Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, or Seed of David.

When you look in the manger you see God starting over with Adam; not just a baby but Emmanuel. Do you know what Emmanuel means? It means "God with us". This is man as God intended man to be. God is back in the man! He's the God-man. The Lord Jesus is God with us!

So, now God says, "Let me show you what it looks like to be a man as I planned man to be." Man had lost his connection, his union with God. So, God sent His Son to live as a man as God intended man to be. I want to show you what that looks like from the lips of Jesus; His own testimony. This is what it looked like when Christ lived as God intended man to live.

I want to start with John 17:22&23, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me." When He prayed that prayer, He was only hours from going to the cross. He's thanking His Father for the provision that He had to live on earth. He describes it saying, "You gave me glory. The glory you gave Me, I give them." What glory is that? It's not His essential glory. In eternity, He is God. He was glorified. The Father didn't give Him that. He's had that glory; He's God.

Let me illustrate this. Revelation 21:23, "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God

has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” Why doesn’t heaven need the light of the sun and of the moon? It’s because Christ went back to heaven and got the glory that He used to have. Let me ask this question, when Jesus lived on the earth, did we need the sun and the moon? The answer is yes because He set aside the manifestation of that glory.

But there is another glory which enabled Him to live like a man. John 17:21 explains what that glory is, “...that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.” The same truth is in John 17:23, “I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.” He said that the glory You have given Me is My union with You; that we’re One and that they’ll be One as We are One.

John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory..” That glory, said simply, the glory that gave Jesus the provision to live, was the Father Himself. John 17:21, “That they may all be one, even as Thou art, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. John 17:23 once more, “I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.” The Father gave Himself to the Son, so that He could live as a man. These verses from the lips of Jesus explain the life He lived. John 8:28&29, “Jesus therefore said, ‘When you lift up the son of Man, then you know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.’ It’s an amazing truth that Jesus said, “I do nothing on My own initiative.”

John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” He said, “I do not seek My own will; I seek My Father’s will.” We know from Gethsemane in Matthew 26:39, that He didn’t want His own will, “And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.’” Jesus said, “I do nothing on My own. I do not seek My own will.” John 10:37&38, “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”

We say that Jesus did many miracles. He didn't do any miracles! The Father did them! Listen to John 14:10, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." He said "God Himself put Himself in Me and I initiate nothing and He does everything. It's not My will; it's His will. It's not My works; it's His works." That's why before He multiplied the loaves He thanked His Father. That wasn't table grace. He was saying, "Thank You for doing this miracle." That's why at the grave of Lazarus He said, "I thank You, Father. You always do it."

John 8:50, "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges." John 7:18, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." Do you see His testimony? "I initiate nothing. I have no will of My own. All My works are from My Father. I never seek My own glory." John 12:27&28, "Now My soul has become troubled and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour."

John 14:24, one more testimony from Jesus, "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." He said, "The words which I speak are not mine." John 12:49 is the same thing, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak."

When He spoke to Nicodemus they were the words of the Father. When He spoke to the woman at the well, they were the words of the Father. When He gave the Sermon on the Mount, they were the words of the Father. When He gave the Sermon in the Valley, they were the words of the Father. Jesus said, "I do nothing on My own initiative. And I have no will of My own and I do nothing but what He does. He does it in Me. I don't seek My own glory. I only speak what He tells Me to speak."

That's why we read John 14:9, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father?'" He lived as God intended man to live; to put His Father on display. He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." John 12:45, "And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me."

I want to make one clarification. Our Lord Jesus as the last Adam lived as God intended man to live. He then described that life in His own words. God made a provision that He would set aside Who He was by nature and as a man He would depend on the Father Who is living in His heart. So, He said, "I don't initiate anything. I don't have My will; I choose His will." That's the part I want to clarify because, as God, they never had two wills. Jesus always agreed with the Father but He wants to illustrate humanity and as a man He said, "I determine to depend on the indwelling Father." So, we, as men and women, depend on the indwelling Christ. We are not robots. "He lives in me, nevertheless I live." And Jesus said, "I will lay down My will as a man to demonstrate that I only want God's will."

God the Father sent God the Son into the world. That was quite a journey and I want you to follow that journey with me. When you take a journey there has to be a destination or a goal, an end. My Lillian doesn't just say, "Go to the store." She gives me a list. She tells me what isle to go down and what brand to buy and which coupons to use to get it cheaper and she even tells me what roads to take to save gas. When Jesus left heaven, I want to show you the difference between His journey and His goal.

I think it's easy to identify His goal. John 3:17, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him." He was sent so that the world might be saved. John 6:39, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:14, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." That's the goal; to be the Savior of the world. That's the end; that's the destiny.

But what about His journey? We say in Micah 5:2, that it's Bethlehem, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrata, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." He went to Bethlehem but that wasn't His goal. That's part of the journey. He was nine months in Mary's womb but he didn't stay there. He went to Bethlehem but he didn't stay there. You might say his goal

was Nazareth. That was his boyhood town. He didn't stay there very long. Remember how they tried to throw Him over the cliff?

The Father sent the Son into the wilderness to be tempted. That was only forty days. That's part of the journey but it's not the goal. Luke 4:14&15, "And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all." You might say that His goal was Galilee. That's where He did His teaching and where He let the Father do His miracles. That wasn't His destination. That was three and a half years. Well, you might say that His destination was the cross. He came to save the world.

Listen to Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." When we talk about His goal, I don't want to take the cross, His death, His resurrection and just say, "That's part of the journey." In Gethsemane He sweat drops of blood. There I think He became sin for us. On the cross He shed His life's blood. He took what we deserved. He crushed eternity into three hours. And when He rose again from the dead, that was part of His journey. "The wages of sin is death." If one sin was not forgiven He would still be dead.

I don't want to play with this but I want you to understand God's plan. On the journey, He had to go to Gethsemane but He was only there for a few hours. He had to go to the cross but He was only there for six hours. He had to go into the grave but that was only three days. He's still on a journey. That was not His destination. He provided a righteous ground for people to get saved. So, you say that His journey took Him to Bethlehem and Nazareth. That's His journey. But even after the resurrection He wasn't finished.

Matthew 26:32, "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." When He arose, the angels told them, Matthew 28:7 "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." Matt. 28:16&17, "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated." More than five hundred people gathered in Galilee after Jesus rose from the dead. So, you might say that Galilee is the goal. But He said, "No, I'm not finished yet."

Acts 1:5, "For John baptized you with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." He told them,

“After Galilee, go to Jerusalem.” Acts 1:9, “After He had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” He ascended and went back to His Holy Father God. Is that the end of the journey? John 14:16, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” It’s part of the journey.

He goes to the cross. He goes to the grave. He rises. He goes to Galilee. He goes to heaven. And on Pentecost He comes back again to put God in man again, so we could live as God intended men to live. Was that His destiny; to come to you? There’s no question that it’s true and He stopped at your heart. He was determined to come to you. Nothing could stop Him from coming to you.

But He said, “The Father sent Me to save the world. God gave Me an incarnate body through the Virgin Mary. I went as far as I could go in that body.” John 10:16, “And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice, and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.” He said, “My journey is not finished.” John 17:20 again, “I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.” John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”

Jesus said, “I’ve come as far as I can come in my incarnate body. May I have your body, please?” It’s the same Jesus but He has a new body and He’s still on the journey. His journey is to save others. He came to me to reach them. He came to you to reach them. This is the exchanged life. He’s still alive; it’s not you. He lives in you. John 17:22, “And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are One. The glory that You gave Me, to enable Me to live as a man, I now give to them.” John 20:21, “Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” John 6:57, “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.” John 14:12, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.”

When Jesus came to live as God intended man to live, He set aside Who He was by nature as God, and He said, “I will never again grasp that.” And the Father said, “I will live in You.” Our Lord Jesus set aside Who He was by nature and depended on the Father to live in Him. He has called us to set aside who we are by nature and to be totally dependent on the One that lives in us. “As the Father sent Me, I send you.” That’s the exchanged life. He still lives but He now lives to continue His journey. Now that He has a new body, by your permission, He can continue the journey.

He said, “Greater things I’ll do now.” When He was on earth in His incarnate body, He was limited. If He was in Jerusalem, He wasn’t in Bethany. If He was in Bethany, He wasn’t in Jericho. If He was in Jericho, He wasn’t in Samaria. But now He has a new body. He’s in the United States. He’s in Africa. He’s in China. He’s in France. He now lives and He can do greater things because He has a new body!

I once heard a story of a missionary girl and God had revealed to her this life that He wants to live in her. She got all excited and wanted to give a testimony but she was nervous. So, she had trouble getting the words out correctly. Here’s what she wanted to say, “Let Christ have His way in your life.” Here’s what she did say, “Let Christ have His life in your way.” What she said was much better than what she intended to say!

It’s possible that there is somebody in this room, you might be thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years old, and you have never lived as God intended you to live. You haven’t understood what Jesus modeled in His example for living. He said, “I make no decisions on My own. I have no private will. I don’t seek my own honor. I don’t do anything unless He does it in me. I don’t say anything unless it’s through Him.” Have you even begun to taste the exchanged life? He wants to live again as your substitute. As He once died in your place, He now wants to live in your place. He’s still on the journey. He has not yet saved the world and He wants to do it in and through us. May God help us to live as God intended man to live!

Our Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for Your word, not what we think it might mean but all that You have inspired it to mean. Work that in our hearts we pray and thank You for being willing to live in us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

2

FAITH

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE THROUGH MY MESSAGE ON FAITH

I desire to show that God is a Spirit and He is the only object of faith. Since God the Spirit is invisible, faith does not depend upon anything visible when trusting Him. Our natural hearts gravitate toward sight, or at least toward a mixture of sight and spirit. But true faith rests on the objective revelation of the Lord. I also desire to show the difference between unbelief and struggling faith. Unbelief has no desire to believe; struggling faith has the desire to believe. God accepts struggling faith as faith. Faith is only as strong as the Object it leans upon. God Himself is the object of faith.

The Indispensable Principle

I want to begin by reminding my heart and your heart of the indispensable principle; total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. I'd like to share this verse and then we'll look at the new material. Psalm 81:10, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Is that an invitation? Is that a command? Is that a challenge? Is God saying, "You can't open your mouth wider than I can fill it?" Is it a promise? I think that verse teaches us, "If you are ready to eat, I'm ready to feed you." We never have to overcome God's reluctance. We always have to lay hold of His infinite willingness.

Let me introduce what I'd like to look at now. It's such a large theme, that's it's almost impossible to do it in one lesson. The foundation that I want to discuss is faith; what it means to trust the Lord. How can we trust the Lord? I have some verses to illustrate why this is very important. Hebrews 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Romans 14:23, "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin." 2 Corinthians 5:7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight..." Galatians 3:11, "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.'" All of that is to say faith is very important. If you don't have it, you can't please God. Faith is reckoned as righteousness.

If you tried to study faith in the Bible you would see how large that is. We could talk about faith as a gift from God. We could talk about God being the author and finisher of faith. We could discuss how it's reckoned as righteousness. We could talk about it being "the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen." We could talk about "mustard seed" faith. We could relate faith to works. We could talk about the difference between faith and presumption. We could contrast it with the law. You get the idea.

Faith is not defined in the Bible. It's described in many ways but it is not defined; faith is looking, faith is trusting, faith is eating, faith is drinking, faith is receiving, faith is abiding. It's so big that it's hard to say, "This is the foundation." So, I thought I would share two stories with you. The first story, in my understanding, describes what

faith is and what it is not. The second story describes how I know that I'm trusting God. How do I know that I have faith?

The first story that describes what faith is and what it isn't is the story of the disciples on the stormy sea. That's in Mark 6. In the second story I'll only be looking at one part of it; the woman that touched the hem of the garment of our Lord Jesus.

Mark 6:45-52, "And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away. And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray. And when it was evening, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land. And seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea; and he intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out: for they all saw Him and were frightened. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.' And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened."

They did not learn the lesson of the loaves. So, there is a connection. The boat ride on the stormy sea was supposed to remind them of the lessons of the loaves. I don't want to spend time on the feeding of the five thousand but I want to give you the lesson. It's described in Mark 6:37, "But He answered and said to them, 'You give them something to eat!' There were five thousand people and more and He said to give them something to eat. That's an impossible command. Nobody could do what Jesus told them to do. They had five biscuits, two fish and maybe ten thousand people because it was men plus women and children. It was absolutely impossible to obey God.

That miracle continued and showed how the impossible can become possible. The simple answer is to bring Jesus into the picture. Mark 6:41-43, "And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish, and there were five thousand men who ate the loaves."

The Lord Jesus took a little boy's lunch and divided it thirteen ways. I don't know if you were holding one thirteenth of a little boy's lunch what it would look like. The gospel tells us that the smallest group was fifty. If you had that in your hand and the smallest group was fifty people, what would you do? Would you give it to one person? Would you try to break it? It doesn't look like enough. It doesn't feel like enough. It never feels like you have enough Jesus. But that morsel was a picture of the adequacy of Christ. At the end, if God had said, "Pick up everything you handed out," it would break your back. You wouldn't be able to carry what you handed out. But at the moment it doesn't feel like enough or look like enough.

I study to teach. It never feels like I have enough. But when I look back over the years at how much God has given, I couldn't carry it all. Here's what Jesus said, "Hand it out and then come back for more. Give yourself until empty and bring your basket for more." How to obey an impossible command; give yourself out empty and keep coming to Jesus. That was the lesson of the loaves. Now our Lord Jesus is going to test them to see if they learned the lesson of the loaves; to trust Jesus to do the impossible.

We know that something very spiritual is going on because Jesus did something here that He never did before and that He never did again. It's a very strong word in the original language. Matthew 14:22, "And immediately He made the disciples get into the boat, and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away." He made them get into the boat. He forced them. That's the word. Maybe they said, "We'll help you clean up." He said, "Get in the boat." Maybe they said, "We'll wait for You." He said, "GET IN THE BOAT!" And it was with such a force, that they had no choice. They had to get into the boat.

Mark 6:45 teaches the same thing. "And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away." Here was the command, "You go in the boat and I'll meet you at the other side. I'm going to meet you at Bethsaida." Now, these were fishermen. They may have made that trip many times. It would be easy to obey the Lord. That's not difficult to go to the other side. But they were in a test; He will send a storm.

John 6:18, "And the sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing." I'm going to let the Bible describe how terrible

this storm was. It said that a strong wind was blowing. Matthew 14:24, “But the boat was already many stadia away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.” They are being battered by the waves. Don’t confuse this storm with the storm when Jesus fell asleep in the boat. Those are two different storms. When He fell asleep in the boat it was a matter of life and death. Their lives are not in danger in this storm. This has to do with their sanity. This is not about surviving. It’s about overcoming.

John 6:19, “When therefore they had rowed about three or four miles, they beheld Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.” They had already rowed about three or four miles. Scholars tell us that they had to go seven miles. They are about half way. Matthew 14:25, “And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.” It was the fourth watch of the night. They divided their night into four different time periods; six to nine, nine to twelve, twelve to three and three to six. Don’t read that “la, la, la”. What that means practically is that these disciples are tired.

They were awake all day with the feeding of the five thousand. They left around sunset and they are in the third watch of the night. That means that they had been rowing for about nine hours and they aren’t even half way home. Think spiritually. Have you ever tried to obey God and worn yourself out and you aren’t even half way home? Try to get that picture; the night is dark and long, the Master is absent, the sea is boisterous, the men are tired and they aren’t even half way obeying the Lord. It’s impossible without a miracle to obey the Lord.

That’s the background. Let me set it up so we can get the principle. There are three ways to relate to Jesus. Keep in mind that we are talking about faith. I’m going to describe three scenes and in each scene the disciples don’t move. Jesus moves but the disciples don’t move. In the first scene, Jesus is on a mountain praying and the disciples are on a stormy sea. Mark 6:46&47, “And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray. And when it was evening, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land.”

In the second scene Jesus is walking on the water and He’s going to go past them. Mark 6:48, “And seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass

by them.” So, the disciples are on the sea and Jesus is on the mountain. The disciples are on the stormy sea and Jesus is walking by.

Here’s the third scene, Mark 6:51, “And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished...” He’s on the mountain, He’s on the sea and He’s in the boat. At this point Matthew talks about Peter walking on the water. But we aren’t going to look at that part. That was just teaching the lessons of the loaves again.

So, I’m suggesting that we are on a stormy sea and we can relate to Jesus on a mountain, we can relate to Jesus walking by or we can relate to Jesus on the boat. Think about it. Which would you rather have? Would you rather have Jesus on the mountain or Jesus walking by or Jesus in the boat?

Let me discuss each of those. The first one, Jesus on the mountain praying, Matthew 14:23, “...and after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.” Mark 6:46, “And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray.” We have no idea what Jesus was praying. Maybe He was praying that they would pass the test. They had a great ministry that day and maybe Jesus was praying for them. Maybe He was praying for the people He fed that day. Maybe He was just having fellowship with His Holy Father God. We do know that Jesus was praying and that at three o’clock in the morning He looked out and He saw them. The Bible says that He saw them struggling at the oars.

I’m suggesting that Jesus on the mountain praying is pure faith because you can’t see Him. “We walk by faith and not by sight.” Jesus was on the mountain praying, very much like today as He’s in heaven praying and we’re on a stormy sea.

Jesus gave a clear word, Mark 6:45, “And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away.” They had a word that Jesus would meet them on the other side. Hebrews 11 talks about “faith is the evidence of things not seen”. In this first scene Jesus is invisible but He knows everything that is going on. He sees them and He’s praying and when He sees them struggling, He walks upon the water.

It’s not easy to trust a God that you can’t see. So, they failed that part. If they had called upon the Lord, they would have learned the

lesson of the loaves. Let me remind you about the lesson of the loaves. Though it doesn't feel like much and it doesn't look like much, if I keep coming back to Jesus, at the end of the day I will see that I had more than enough for me and thousands like me. That's the lesson.

They didn't call on the Lord when they were rowing. They didn't talk to one another and say, "We better not fail this test." I don't even think they were thinking about the miracle of the loaves. They were self-conscious. They are storm conscious. They are thinking about their circumstance. They aren't thinking, "Oh, we've got to remember what He taught us when He fed five thousand people."

I think when the Bible says, "They are struggling at the oars," I think that is more than sore muscles. It's more than sore arms. Spiritually speaking, it's frustrating that you can't obey God. They are weary and tired and defeated and maybe they are even despairing. A Christian attempting to obey God in His own strength will experience that kind of frustration; defeat and failure. "I tried and I can't. I want to obey and I can't."

Every command in this book is impossible. "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church." I say, "I can't unless I go to Jesus." "Rejoice evermore. In everything and for everything give thanks." "Love your enemy." "Pray for those who curse you." "Go the second mile." "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." I say, "I can't without Jesus." "Stretch forth your withered hand." The man with the withered hand said, "I can't because it's withered." "Take up your bed and walk." The crippled man said, "I can't. I'm crippled." "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus said, "I can't. I'm dead." With every command we need to keep coming to the Lord. So, they were struggling at the oars. That's looking at Jesus on the mountain while He's praying.

I told you that the second one was Jesus walking on the water but it will make more sense to you if I do the third one now. John 6:20&21, "But He said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' They were willing therefore to receive Him into the boat; and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." In John 6:21 they received Him into the boat. Mark 6:51&52, "And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened."

I ask my own heart the question I ask you. Which would you rather have? When I first started to study this, my heart said, "I want Jesus in the boat. I don't want Him where I can't see Him. I want Him where I can see Him." This is the exact opposite of faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. When He is in the boat we can see Him and touch Him and we can hear Him. We are together. That is the exact opposite of faith. They couldn't have faith while He was in the boat.

Here's an amazing thing. When He was in the boat He did two wonderful miracles. Matthew 14:32, "And when they got into the boat, the wind stopped." Those of you who have struggled at the oars in your own strength, you remember what a blessing it was when God calmed the storm. My heart is always praying, "Calm the storm."

There is a second miracle He did, John 6:21, "They were willing therefore to receive Him into the boat; and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." That's amazing! They were only half way home and suddenly they were at their destination. I would have loved to have been working at the marina! The boat got raptured! My natural heart says, "Calm the storm and let me arrive at my destination." We think God responds to faith and that He does great miracles. Sometimes He is responding to unbelief when He works those miracles.

Hold that a moment; faith and sight. Let me look at the third possibility. I can relate to a God I can't see who is praying for me. I can relate to a God that I can see but there is no faith because it's all sense. Mark 6:48-50, "And seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea: and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were frightened. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I; do not be afraid.'"

So, now they are on the boat and they look out and they see a ghost. The mountain was no sight, in the boat is all sight, in the middle it is half and half – a ghost. When it is mixed you aren't sure if it's an enemy or a friend. Should I be afraid or should I pack up?

"That thing that came into my life; that doctor's report; is that from the devil or from the Lord?" So, there are some people that relate to the Lord half and half, "I want to trust Him but it's still me." It's

both. It looks spiritual but you aren't sure. It leaves you standing on the deck afraid.

If I don't see Jesus invisible on the mountain, will he forsake me? You know the answer is no. He'll see you struggling at the oars and He'll come to you. He knows when you are frustrated and He knows when you are trying to obey and you can't. Mark 6:48, "He saw them struggling at the oars," but notice that it says that He intended to pass by. He did not want to get on the boat. He didn't want to do the miracle of calming the storm. He didn't want to take them to their desired destination. He won't fail us if we struggle at the oars but what if we don't let Him walk by?

Let me tell you what He taught them by walking by. He taught them, first of all, that He was there. He said, "Be not afraid; it's Me." Mark 6:50, "For they all saw Him and were frightened. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.'" If I fail or struggle, the Lord will come to me and He will let me know that it is Him. In fact, it was the very wind of the storm that carried His voice. So, the first thing He wants you to know is that He is there. The second thing He wants you to know is that the storm is under His feet. He is in control.

If you fail again and say, "It's not enough that You are there and You are in control," or, "Get in the boat and do a miracle," or "I want to see a miracle," I promise you that in your struggle, the Lord will not forsake you. If you struggle at the oars He'll come walking by. He doesn't want to get on the boat. He wants you to know that it's Him and that it is under control. If you still fail and say, "Get on the boat," He will not fail you. He will get on board and do a wonderful miracle.

Some of you might be in a position where you said, "I failed. I invited Him on board to do a miracle and He didn't come. I asked Him to heal my loved one. I needed a miracle and He didn't come. I didn't want that person to die. I asked the Lord how come He didn't come on board and do a miracle. I didn't want to lose my job and I didn't want to go bankrupt and I asked Him for a miracle."

If you need it, He will always come on board and do a miracle. If He didn't come on board, you might have more faith than you think you have. Maybe you didn't need it. You went on without it. He doesn't want to come on board but if you need it to go on with Him, He'll come on board and do that miracle. So, perhaps you have more faith than you think you have.

When He comes aboard, because it's sight, He will do a miracle and He'll calm the storm and He'll take you to your destination. He'll do one more thing; He'll mildly rebuke you for your little faith (Mark 6:52). Where is your faith? You didn't learn the lesson of the loaves. So, that's the first story and now I want to wrap it up with the second one. I can relate to Him on the mountain or I can relate to Him going by and letting me know He is there and He has it under control or I can relate to Him on the boat; faith, sight, or mixture.

Set that aside and think now about the woman who touched His hem. I want to show you how you know whether you are trusting the Lord. Mark 5:30&31, "...and immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My garments?' And His disciples said to Him, 'You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?''" She reached Him but she couldn't reach Him until He came within her reach. He always comes within our reach so we can reach Him.

I want you to picture this. If you had on a long robe like Jesus had on a long robe, and I were to touch the hem of that robe, would you feel it? You see, the point of the story is not her touch. The point is how sensitive Jesus is. He feels it. The difference between unbelief and faith, the difference between unbelief and struggling faith, and the difference between Peter and Judas is that Peter denied the Lord but Judas forsook the Lord. Jesus told Peter, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Judas did not have a willing spirit. Unbelief has no desire to believe. Faith has a desire to believe. Weak faith has a desire to believe. Struggling faith has a desire to believe. God accepts struggling faith as faith.

The important thing about faith is not faith. The important thing about faith is the object of your faith. She didn't have great faith. She had a little touch. But with a little touch and a great Savior, she didn't touch the garment, she touched the Lord. The reason I know that is because at the cross the soldiers gambled for the garment. They had the whole garment and not just the hem. They walked away with His whole robe. What's the difference? When she touched it, Jesus was in the robe. That's faith; touching Jesus; willingness to touch Jesus! You might say that it doesn't feel like enough but it will have to be. He's sensitive. He's great and He can hear you and feel you.

Bible study is like the garment. If Christ is in it, it's wonderful. Fellowship is wonderful if Christ is in it. Ministry is wonderful if Christ is in it. Any kind of service is wonderful if Christ is in it. But what is church without Him? What are the ordinances without Him? I can relate to a God that I can't see. He is praying for me and has promised that we are going to the other side. Or I can relate to a God who is willing to do all kinds of miracles for me but then I don't need faith. Or I can relate to a God who is walking by and letting me know that it is Him and that it is under control. The Lord will always deal with you where you are.

If you fail, He won't forsake you. He wants you to trust an invisible God. But if you struggle, He'll come. He wants to pass by but if you need Him on the boat, He'll come on the boat. If you have little faith, you have a sensitive Savior who feels. How do I know if I'm trusting the Lord? It's when I reach out with my little faith to a sensitive Savior. This is a great foundation.

Father, thank You so much for Your word. Thank You that we don't have to have faith in our faith but we can trust the Living God. Thank You for Your patience with dealing with us where we are. Teach us the lesson of the loaves, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

3

REVELATION

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON REVELATION

I desire to prove that every part of the Bible is given to unveil the Lord Jesus to our hearts. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal Christ in the Scriptures. A merely academic study of the Bible will never reveal Christ. The Bible, like the Lord Jesus, has both a human side and a divine side. Only God can reveal God. Mastering the human side of the Bible without receiving the Holy Spirit's revelation of Christ will cause us to become increasingly proud. We need the Bible, the revelation of Christ, and we need a revelation of the revelation to have a heart knowledge of Him.

The Indispensable Principle

As we come to look in the word there is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. If we substitute what is helpful for what is indispensable God will not use it anymore. Only God can reveal God. So, we come as little children and we say, "Show me Jesus." John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." Jesus said, "Anyone who is taught of God, who has heard from the Father, comes to Jesus." How do you know if what you hear is from God? You know it's from God if it leads to Jesus. Everyone who is taught of God comes to Jesus.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the indwelling Holy Spirit. You put a Bible Teacher in our heart. We pray that You would unveil Jesus to our hearts. We thank You, Lord, for every part of Your word. In a special way tonight we thank You for John chapter one. Show us Christ in a living way. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are looking at the great fundamentals of our faith and I think one of the greatest fundamentals is revelation. Another way to say that is, "How can we see Jesus when we study the Bible?" We believe that Jesus is the theme of the Bible. Luke 24:27, "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." That was on the road to Emmaus. He opened the Scriptures and showed things concerning Himself. John 5:39&40, "You search the Scriptures, because, you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life." They searched the Scriptures but they didn't come to Jesus. John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they all shall be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me."

I hope the Lord has begun to teach you that you never study the Bible to know the Bible. God didn't give us the Bible to know the Bible. You study Genesis to know Jesus. You study Joshua to know Jesus. You study Psalms to know Jesus. Every book in the Bible reveals the Lord in a different way. The only way to know Him personally is to see Him in the word of God.

Jesus gave a great word to Peter in Matthew 16:16&17, "And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the

living God.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’” And there He gave the secret to Peter, “You didn’t give it; My Father gave it to you.” Paul prayed for Christians in Ephesians 1:17&18, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” When we read the Bible we must ask the Lord to open our eyes.

I would like to set this truth of revelation before your heart by looking at Jesus as the Word of God. We know He is the Living Word and we know this is the written word. We study the written word to see the Living Word. Let me spend a few minutes talking about the word. After we do that I want to take you to Peter’s testimony just before he died. Peter looked back over his thirty years of life and he said, “I remember this.” Let me begin with Jesus as the word.

What is God communicating when He says, “The word?” The prologue, the beginning, the introduction of John 1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” It begins with verse 1 and ends in verse 18, “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father. He has explained Him.”

Words are for communication. John 1:1 says that He is the Word and John 1:18 says that God has explained Him. I want to start very simply with what is a word? It’s a sound that has a meaning and you can’t understand it apart from its context. I can think a word in my mind but you won’t know what I’m thinking. You might say, “I can tell by the look on your face; you are surprised or you are angry or you are discouraged or you are sad or you are happy or you are hungry.” But unless I speak a word, you don’t know what I’m thinking. Sometimes one word is not enough. Sometimes you need a sentence. Sometimes you need a paragraph.

We have an expression, “In other words.” So, when Lillian wants me to really know what she is saying, she will give me her command and then she’ll say, “In other words,” and she’ll restate the same command. Sometimes when the house is on fire and someone says, “Jump!” you understand one word. If a missile is flying toward your head and someone says, “Duck!” you understand one word.

I used to golf but I don't anymore. I hit a lady in the head with a golf ball and she sued me and I yelled one word, "Fore!" She didn't duck. It's her fault! It was a good shot. It went over the pin, over the fence and into the parking lot where she was putting groceries in her car. So, that was a good shot!

One word sometimes can communicate an idea but let's say the word is "person". I am thinking of a person. Who am I thinking of? You don't know if it's a girl, a boy, a child or an athlete or a political person or a character in the Bible. You need more words. You'll say, "I need more than 'person'." "I'm thinking of an animal. What is it?" You don't know. One word is not enough. "I'm thinking of a plant. I'm thinking of a food." You might say, "That's not enough. I need more words." What if the word is bigger, like "planet". And I say, "Tell me everything about a planet." You would say, "Which one?"

Here's a word; universe. I say, "Tell me everything about the universe." Or I say, "Tell me everything about the galaxy." It's one word and it's too big. Even "earth", you would say, "I need to know about weather and about rocks and about plants." So, one word is not enough.

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Explain God. It's too big. It's bigger than "galaxy". It's bigger than the universe. So, we come to the Lord and say, "The Word is God. Help us. That's too big." So God says, "I'll help you." John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." The Word became flesh. He says, "Now you have extra help. Now you have Jesus on earth. If you want to know the Word, the Word became flesh; look at Jesus." So, we look in the gospels and we see His love, His mercy and His compassion. We see His justice and His holiness and His goodness.

The Bible says that the Word "tabernacled" among us. You know the Old Testament tabernacle. It was a tent made out of skin that God wanted to fill with His glory. You are a tent made out of skin that God wants to fill with His glory. We said, "Lord, I want to know You but the word "God" is too big." In His love He said, "Alright, the Word became flesh and lived among us."

So, we begin to study the life of Jesus. Thirty three and a half years He lived on earth. We study His miracles and study His teachings and we study His discourses with different people and when we are all

done in our hearts we say, “I still don’t know you. God, You’ve got to help me. You need to bring it down. I need more words. The word ‘God’ is too big; ‘the Word became flesh’ is too much.”

He says, “You want words? I’ll give you words. I’ll give you 1,189 chapters. Is that enough words? I’ll give you 81,173 verses. Is that enough words? I’ll give you 3,000,000 letters. Is that enough?” I say, “Thank You, Lord. Now I have the Bible.” I begin to study the history of the Bible and I study the prophecies and I study the poetry and I study the gospels and I study all of the redemptive history and I study the titles and names of God and I say, “Thank You, Lord. You gave me the word but it’s too much. ‘The Word became flesh.’ That helps but it’s too much. Now I have a whole Bible. Thank You but I still don’t know the Lord. I end up with theology. I end up with creeds. I end up with philosophy. And we have denominations that all comes from the Bible.”

I have a library with three thousand books, all based on the Bible. Some people study the Bible and they end up in a cult. I say, “Lord, like Abraham, don’t be angry. Let me ask You one more time. I appreciate that You took the Word and the Word became flesh. I appreciate that You took the Word and turned it into words and I have it on paper; more than 3,000,000 words. Thank You. But Lord, I still don’t know You. Can you help me one more time? I’m ashes and flesh. Please, don’t get angry.”

God says, “Alright. I took the Word and the Word became flesh. I took the Word of God and turned it into the word of God.” John 16:13, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, he will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” So, God says, “Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll put My Spirit in your heart and He will take the words from this book and He will explain that the Word became flesh and you will know that the Word is God.” Do you see God’s provision? We have the Holy Spirit to come to the book to show us the Living Word.

1 Corinthians 2:11&12, “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so, the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.” I have thoughts in my mind. None of you know those thoughts. But the spirit

that is in me, Ed Miller, knows what I'm thinking. No man knows; only the spirit of the man that is in him. How can I know God's thoughts? I need His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:16, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." Do you see it? We have His Spirit, so we have His mind. This is God's provision and we're calling it "revelation". The Holy Spirit in our hearts takes the written word and we behold the Living Word, Christ, so that we might know God. The Word was God. He wants us to know Him intimately. That was His provision.

With that as the background, I want to give you Peter's testimony. In his early life, as we read in the verse before in Matthew 16:16&17, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal it. You got that from My Father." But you know Peter. He sometimes forgot what he learned. Thirty years go by. The last book he ever wrote was 2 Peter, and the last words he ever wrote were, "That you might grow in the knowledge of Christ." So, as he writes the last letter he ever wrote just before he died, he said, "I want to show you how to see Jesus in the Bible."

If you were Peter and you looked back over your life, and you had to choose only one event, what would you choose? Would you think about when your brother introduced you to Jesus? Would you think about the miracle of the coin lodged in the fish's gill? Would you think about Lazarus being raised from the dead? You are ready to die. Would you tell them how you one time walked on water? Would you tell them about Gethsemane and about your failure? Would you tell them about the resurrection or about the ascension? You were there when you saw Him rise. Would you tell them about Pentecost when He came in the Person of the Holy Spirit? Would you tell them how an angel set you free and you got out of prison?

There were so many events in Peter's life and as he's ready to die he looks back and he says, "Of all of those events, there is one I want you to know about." He chose the transfiguration. To him that was what the people needed to hear before he died.

I just want to review the facts about the transfiguration and then we'll look at the principle. This record is written in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Listen to Matthew 16:28, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" The event begins with this strange promise. He said that there were some standing there who

would not die until He came back. Many refer to this as the second coming of Christ. But Christ still hasn't come back. What did he mean, "Some of you standing here will not die until you see the Son of Man coming in His glory?"

Many commentators believe that the answer is the transfiguration. One week after Jesus gave that promise, the disciples – Peter, James and John – went up with Him on the mountain. Some say that is like the second coming in a picture because Christ is in the middle and the three disciples, representing the Jews, are there and the world is at the base and He's being glorified. So, they say that maybe that is what He meant.

I'm going to let Matthew tell the story, Matthew 17:1-8, "And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!' And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone."

Mark tells pretty much the same story, only he makes this addition in Mark 9:3, "And His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them." Even His garments were radiant. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that Jesus went on the mountain but only Luke tells us why. Luke 9:28, "And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray." He went up to pray.

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that Elijah and Moses suddenly appeared. Luke 9:31, "...who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." They began to talk about the death that he was going to accomplish.

Matthew and Mark tell us that Peter wanted to build three tabernacles. Mark 9:6 tells us why Peter said that. “For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.” He didn’t know what to say. When you don’t know what is going on, you want to build something and when people are not seeing the Lord they want to start a ministry.

Only Luke tells us, in this great scene, that the disciples fell asleep. Luke 9:32, “Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.” Luke also tells us that the glory cloud came down and enveloped them; covered them.

Those are the facts. Listen as Peter interprets the facts. I’m putting words in Peter’s mouth but here’s what he said, “I’m ready to die but I had an experience once that I didn’t understand. Now it’s thirty years later and I finally get it. I want to explain it to you. I want to tell you what it meant. I didn’t know at the time but God was teaching me how to see Jesus in the Bible.”

As he looked back at that transfiguration, God opened his heart to what it means to see Jesus in the Bible. Peter said that He had a prophetic word and the prophetic word was, “You are not going to die before I come.” That was a true word. It couldn’t be any truer. If anyone went to Peter and asked his testimony, during that week between the prophesy and the vision, “Do you believe some people standing here will not die before He comes?” Peter said, “Of course, it’s a true word. It came out of the mouth of Jesus. I believe it. He said it. I have no reason to doubt it.” But a week later he had another experience. He already had a true word but he is about to have a revelation of Jesus. He had the true word but when Jesus showed up in all His glory he never put that together.

Listen as he explains it in 2 Peter 1:16-19, “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ – and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”

Peter had a prophetic word. He couldn't make it more true. But he said that, "Now we have a prophetic word more sure. It can't be more true but now something happened that made something true more certain." And Peter identifies what that was. He said, "One day I had a prophetic word. A week later I had a revelation of Jesus and now I understand how to study the Bible. I have the word and the revelation."

2 Peter 1:19 also gives another word for the Bible. He calls it "a lamp shining in a dark place". He says, "You have the prophetic word, you have the Bible and you have the lamp but is it more sure? Is it more sure because now you have a revelation of Jesus?" In verse 19 he says, "Pay attention to the lamp," until what? "Until the day star arises in your heart."

Do you understand what the day star is? Revelation 22:16, "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." Jesus calls Himself "the morning star" Jesus is the Day Star. The day star is the last star and it says, "Goodbye night; hello day!" It closes the night and it opens the day. Peter says, "Pay attention to this book until the day star arises in your heart and that will become a new day for you." Many people only have the prophetic word. It can't be more true. So, they study the prophetic word and they have good doctrine and they teach that Jesus is coming back and they teach that Jesus is God and they teach the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection. They have the prophetic word but they aren't seeing Jesus. They have no revelation.

Jesus said, "Pay attention to this book until the day star rises in your heart." Brothers and sisters in Christ, are you seeing Christ in the Bible? The indwelling Holy Spirit takes the written word and unveils the Living Word. And the Living Word reveals God. God has called us to know Him and He has made every provision to make this Bible live. If you just study the Bible to know the Bible, you are going to become more proud because knowledge puffs up. You study the Bible to know Jesus through the indispensable principle. You trust the Holy Spirit to show you Christ.

Just before Peter died he looked back thirty years and said, "I've learned the secret. It's not only the prophetic word but the prophetic word made sure in a present revelation." That's a foundation, just like faith is a foundation. We need to see Jesus by God's revelation. Don't

go around judging those who just have the lamp, the prophetic word. But you get alone with the Lord and pay attention until you see Christ. That will be a transfiguration for you.

Our Father, thank You that You gave us the Holy Spirit to unveil the Lord Jesus through the Bible, that we might know You. Help us, Lord, to pay attention to that book until the Day Star rises in our heart. Make the prophetic word more sure by a present revelation of our dear Lord Jesus. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

4

REST

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON REST

I desire to show how rest is being totally satisfied with everything that satisfies God. This includes His satisfaction with the finished work of creation, His satisfaction with the finished work of redemption and His satisfaction with His unfinished work in our hearts as He conforms us to Christ. The fruit of rest is peace and that results when we rest in His satisfaction with all the works of His hands and hear

Indispensable Principle

As we turn to look in God's word, there is one principle that is indispensable and that is total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. It's not only a principle of Bible study but it's a principle of life. We must always depend on God's Holy Spirit. Before we pray, let me share 1 Kings 3:24&25, "Then the king said, 'The one says, "This is my son who is living, and your son is the dead one"; and the other says, "no! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one." Solomon said, "Bring a sword and kill the baby." That's what his lips said, "Kill the baby." But his heart was saying, "Save the baby." When we read the Bible, it's not only what Jesus says but it's His heart. When Lazarus died Jesus told Mary and Martha, "This sickness is not unto death." That's what His lips said but that's not what His heart said. Jesus told me that if I'm to follow Him I'm to hate my wife and family. That's what His lips said but that's not what His heart said. Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead." He didn't mean that. All I'm saying is, that when we study the Bible, put your ear on God's heart and not His lips. We need to hear God's heart.

Our heavenly Father, we thank You for the Holy Spirit who lives inside of us. Now we ask that Holy Spirit would anoint the speaker. We pray that your Holy Spirit would anoint the translator. We pray that the Holy Spirit would anoint the listener. Help us all put our ear to Your heart, so we can hear again so great a salvation. We pray in Jesus' name.

We have been looking at some wonderful foundations of our faith. We looked at the truth of the exchanged life; His life for mine. We looked at the truth of faith and how sensitive Jesus is to the smallest touch. We looked at the truth of revelation and how the Holy Spirit takes the Bible and shows us Jesus. And by God's grace this morning I'd like to look at the truth of resting in the Lord. Beyond all doubt, resting in the Lord is a great foundation.

I want to begin with a wonderful benediction from the Apostle Paul, 2 Thessalonians 3:16. "Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance! The Lord be with you all!" Sometimes our heart says, "Is such a thing possible, that the Lord of peace Himself would continually give peace in every circumstance?" Many Christians don't experience that benediction.

Sometimes they fret and worry. Sometimes they get very frustrated. I pray that after this truth that God shows our heart, that we will understand how to have rest at all times.

I started with that benediction because some have confused peace and rest. Some people think that if in my life I have anxiety, fear, fretting, frustration and confusion, that's proof that I need rest. If I have peace and happiness and satisfaction and if I have joy and calmness, that is the fruit of rest. That is not rest. Peace is not the same as rest. If you have rest, the by-product will be peace. If we are resting in the Lord, the by-product will be joy. God does not give us Jesus and something else called "joy". He doesn't give us Jesus and something else called "peace". He only gives us Jesus. If we have Him, we'll have joy. If we have Him, we'll have peace.

As you go on in the Lord we must learn not to chase after by-products. If I seek Jesus I'll have peace. If I seek peace I'll have frustration. If I seek the will of God, I will never find the will of God. If I seek the God whose will it is, I will have the will of God. In everything we must seek the Lord; not the book of God but the God whose book it is; not the people of God but the God whose people they are; not the will of God but the God whose will it is. So, I want to begin by describing what rest is.

Please follow these verses, Hebrews 4:4, "For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.'" Hebrews 4:9&10, "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His." 4:10 says that God rested. If I can understand what it means that God rested, perhaps I can understand what it means for me to rest. As God rested we must rest. Let me begin with what it means that God rested.

Hebrews 4:4, "For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.'" The Holy Spirit says that after six days of creation God rested. I know what that does not mean. It doesn't mean that God quit working and now He works no more. John 5:17, "But He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.'" It doesn't mean that God was exhausted and weary after He finished. Isaiah 40:28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God,

the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.” God does not become weary.

It certainly doesn’t mean, when it says that God rested, that God was frustrated or anxious. Habbakuk 3:3&4, “God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran, His splendor covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.” We look at creation and we say, “Look at the power of God.” The prophet looked at creation and said, “That is the hiding of His power.” That’s just a little picture of the power of God. Every six days God could have created another universe as big as this and never duplicated any shape, law, size or color. That’s our God! How great is our God!

Genesis 1:4, “And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.” Genesis 1:10, “And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:12, “And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:18, “...and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:21, “And God created the great sea monster, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.”

Genesis 1:25, “And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.” And then He created man, Genesis 1:31, “And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” After He finished, Genesis 2:1&2, “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.”

The key to understanding that God rested, on day one He said, “That’s good.” On day two He finished and said, “That’s good.” And days three, four and five He said, “Good, good, good.” And when He created man he said, “Very good.” God was pleased with His creation. It was finished. It was completed and He was happy. God was satisfied. One reason He made man on the sixth day is because man

would say, “May I please help you. One grain of sand, one blade of grass; can I help?”

God created man when everything was finished. Man’s first day was the Sabbath so man could enter rest. Everything was done and finished and complete. You couldn’t add to it and you couldn’t subtract from it. It was a full and complete creation. God’s joy and happiness and satisfaction in finished creation is a picture of His joy and happiness in a finished redemption. John 19:30 when Jesus was on the cross, “When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.” When He brought so great a salvation to man He said, “It is finished!”

That’s the work that Elijah and Moses talked to Jesus about on the Mount of Transfiguration. Luke 9:31, “...who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” They talked about the work that He would accomplish. When I die I don’t “accomplish” death; I succumb and I give up to death. But Jesus accomplished death; a finished work.

Hebrews 1:3, “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” When He finished redemption He ascended to heaven and sat down. Hebrews 8:1, “Now the main point in what has been said is this; we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens...” He finished and he sat down. Hebrews 12:2, “...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He finished the work and He sat down.

Why couldn’t the priests in the Old Testament sit down? It’s because their work was never done. They had to kill sheep and they had to offer incense and they had to trim the lamps and they had to make the bread and they had to mix the spices and they had to care for the altar. They were never finished. Jesus finished and then He sat down. God was satisfied with the finished work of creation and He rested. God was satisfied with the finished work of redemption and He rested.

Hebrews 4:10, “For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.” The one who

rests must enter rest as God did. For a long time, for many years, what I thought was wrong. I thought that I had to rest in God's finished work. I tried to rest in God's finished work but I thought maybe that I wasn't sincere enough or maybe I didn't trust Him enough or maybe I didn't know enough. Rest is not the Christian resting in the finished work. God is satisfied with the finished work. When I am satisfied that God is satisfied, I enter rest. He satisfied; that's enough for me. That's when you enter rest. It's not somehow that I have entered into being satisfied with what Jesus did. The Bible says that He's satisfied with what Jesus did.

Remember the story of the Passover? Exodus 12:13, "And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." He said, "When I see the blood, I'll pass over you." It's Him seeing the blood; not me.

Let me press this home to your heart by giving an illustration. Hebrews 3:11, "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" It says, "Enter MY rest." Hebrews 3:18, "And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?" They didn't enter HIS rest. Hebrews 4:3, "For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, 'As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world." Because of unbelief they didn't enter MY rest is what God said.

Hebrews 4:10, "Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; and they did not know My ways'..." the good news is that we can enter HIS rest; not the rest that He gives but the rest that He has. Let me ask this, is God concerned about anything going on in your life right now? He's at rest and He wants you to enter His rest and be as unconcerned as He is. God is satisfied with the finished work of creation. God is satisfied with the finished work of redemption.

I would always wonder, "Am I surrendered enough, am I humble enough, am I sincere enough, do I have enough faith." God said, "Don't go there." What you need to know is that He is satisfied. He accepts you. He loves you. He delights in you. He has your future under control. When God allows me to start believing that He has everything under control, I enter rest. His rest was being satisfied. My rest is believing that He is satisfied.

What I would like to do now is take another step. It's true that He's satisfied with everything that He has done in creation and redemption but He's not finished working. Philippians 1:6, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:24, "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass." He's still working. He's not finished. 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

There is still a work in process. God is still conforming us to Jesus. He will complete the work. In His mind and in His purpose it's already finished. Romans 8:30, "...and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Entering rest is not only believing that everything that He has already done makes Him happy but we must also believe that everything that He is doing right now in our lives, He is satisfied with. If I start believing that, the peace of God will flow over on all sides and at all times.

What I would like to do is to illustrate His present work, right now and how His present work pleases Him. I want to illustrate it by His title "The Potter". Isaiah 64:8, "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father. We are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand." If we can understand the potter and the clay, it will help us with His present work. The illustration that I want to give is from Jeremiah 18:2 which talks about the prophet going to the potter's house. "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I shall announce My words to you." Let me give the background of this story.

The background is that God, after the captivity, was going to bring them back to Jerusalem and to do that he was going to use a man named "Cyrus". Just like they didn't understand how a Holy God could use sinful Babylon, they couldn't understand how a Holy God could take a sinful man like Cyrus and bring them back to the land. They were happy that they were going back but they didn't like God's method. "Do it another way." They had a controversy with God. They had an argument with the Lord, not about the end but about the means

to the end. “I want to be conformed to Christ but do I have to go through bankruptcy?” “I want to be conformed to Christ but does that mean I have to get cancer?” “Does that mean that my children must go in a wrong direction?” “Does that mean divorce will come into my life?” “I like the end but I don’t like the means.”

Israel reacts to God’s work. The story of the potter is God reacting to their reaction. With that as background, Jeremiah 18:1&2, “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, ‘Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I shall announce My words to you.’” God tells the prophet, “Go to the potter’s house.” At the potter’s house they would hear the word of God. That’s a strange place to hear the word of God. I go to church to hear the word of God. I go to Bible study to hear the word of God. I have a quiet time to hear the word of God but I don’t go to a potter’s house to hear the word of God.

When he was to go to the potter’s house, he was to keep his mouth shut and say nothing; just look. So, Jeremiah went to the potter’s house. Jeremiah 18:3-6, “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.’” God explains that at the potter’s house you will see that My people are like clay.

I would like to invite you to use your imagination and to come with me and the prophet to the potter’s house. What did he see? Jeremiah 18:3, “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.” The potter was making something on the wheel. Jeremiah didn’t know what but the potter knew what he was making. The clay didn’t know but the potter knew. He was making something on the wheel. In his mind the potter had a plan. He had a blueprint and he had a purpose. He knew the end. There was nothing arbitrary. He was making something.

When I was a child I played with modeling clay. I was not a potter. My uncle would come and say (they called me “Butchie”), “Butchie, what are you making?” I said, “What does it look like?” He said, “It looks like a turtle.” I said, “Okay, I’m making a turtle.” He would ask again, “What are you making?” And I would take another

piece of clay and was asked, “Butchie, is that an ash tray?” I said, “Yes.” I had no plan. I made a ball. I made a pancake. I made a snake but I had no purpose.

When Jeremiah went to the potter’s house he saw the mind of the potter and that he was making something. It’s not a game with God. Pottery is His vocation. It’s not His hobby. He’s not trying to amuse Himself with clay. You are not an experiment with the Lord. When He deals with us, He has in His mind what He is doing. He’s determined to make each of us according to His purpose and knowing how great the Lord is, it’s a wise and loving purpose.

The clay doesn’t know what is going on. It’s not going to help for the clay to get fussy and complain. The clay can’t kick and rebel and can’t murmur. It knows nothing. Especially, the clay can’t give the potter advice. The clay must just allow the potter to do what He is doing. That’s the first thing that He saw; that He was making something. He saw the potter’s mind.

As he watched he saw something else. Jeremiah 18:3, “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.” He saw the potter’s hands and the hands were working with the clay; sometimes on the outside and sometimes on the inside. And He observed a very skillful hand. Sometimes He would press and sometimes He would scrape off some clay. Sometimes He would pound it. He would poke the clay and scrape the clay and move the clay and sometimes it seemed gentle and sometimes it seemed hard. He began to see that when the pressure was the greatest the vessel was most unique.

Jeremiah watched the potter. He saw his mind and that he had a purpose. He saw his hands and saw that he had skill. But then he kept looking and he saw something else. The clay was on a wheel. It was called a throwing wheel. In those days there was no electric motor. In fact, there were no pedals. They had two wheels; a small wheel on top and a large wheel on the bottom and there was a vertical shaft between the two wheels. The clay was put on the top wheel and you saw the potter’s foot; it was kicking the wheel. The foot decided how fast it would go. As he’s watching the potter, he’s watching the clay go around and around. He sees skillful hands and he sees a controlling foot moving that wheel. The clay is getting dizzy.

We are the clay! We don’t know what God is doing! We are spinning around and around and we’re confused. Sometimes He

scrapes us and sometimes there is pressure in our life but we're always spinning and wondering what is going on. The potter knows. The potter is skillful. The potter is in control. Jeremiah kept looking. The clay didn't know what was going on and when he looked he saw something else.

Jeremiah 18:4, "But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make." That was a surprise! The potter who knew the clay, the potter that was so skillful, the potter who was in control, all of a sudden the clay is ruined in His hands. I want to make one little explanation here.

When you think of the vessel being ruined, usually we think of a shard or a broken piece of vessel. But that's the vessel after the kiln. This is not after the fire. That's a different revelation of Jesus. That's Jesus the Smelter, not Jesus the potter. That's a message all its own. This is the clay on the wheel. As it was being formed there was a hard spot on the clay. If the potter were only making a ball, that stubborn spot may never have been discovered. In the clay there was maybe a hair, a piece of straw, a stone. If he were only making a ball, the potter would never find that hard piece of clay. Because he's making a beautiful vessel, like Christ, embellished, and elegant, when God works with us, sometimes in His work He finds a stubborn spot. I'm so glad that the clay was ruined in His hands.

Then Jeremiah saw something else. He saw the potter's mind and he saw the potter's hand and he saw the potter's foot and he's about to see the potter's heart. When he saw the clay ruined he did an amazing thing. He did not throw the clay away. I would have thrown me away a long time ago. But the Bible says that He made another vessel that brought joy to His heart. Do you believe that the Potter is making you into a vessel?

I'm satisfied that He's satisfied with everything that He has done. Am I satisfied that He is satisfied with everything He is doing? If God works that in your heart you will know what rest is. It's being satisfied that He is satisfied. I don't have to know what God is doing. I have to know that He knows what He is doing.

I'm going to leave the potter's house now and go to the New Testament and give one more illustration. Matthew 8:24, "And behold, there arose a great storm in the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves; but He Himself was asleep." Our Lord Jesus was sleeping

in the storm; God was at rest. The disciples were not resting. I'm going to describe faith as many people think it is. They think that faith is coming to the end of yourself.

Matthew 8:25, "And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, 'Save us, Lord; we are perishing!'" They came to the end of themselves. They said, "We can't handle it! We need Jesus!" Some people think that faith is not only coming to the end of me but it's rolling everything on Jesus. They woke Him up. Some think faith is coming to the end of me, giving it to Jesus and then getting out of the way and letting God work. Matthew 8:26, "And He said to them, 'Why are you timid, you men of little faith?'" Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm." Jesus stood on the deck and calmed the storm.

It looks like He should have given them applause, "Well done; you have come to the end of yourselves and you gave it to Jesus and you got out of the way." But what do we read? They got rebuked for little faith. Matthew 8:26, "And He said to them, 'Why are you timid, you men of little faith?'" In Mark 4:40 He said, "You have no faith." What is faith, if it's not coming to the end of myself and giving it to Jesus and getting out of the way? May God help us to understand this! Faith is letting Jesus sleep! They did not have to wake Him.

Was He in more control when He was standing on the deck with His arms stretched out, or when it looked like He was unconscious and unaware? I'll confess, nobody wakes Jesus more than I do! He's so tender and He is so patient with us and I don't have to wake Him. He knows what He is doing. Everything that comes into my life, He is satisfied with. What I need is to let Him sleep and believe that He has a plan and He has the skill and He has the control and He has a heart that loves me and if I mess up He'll start again. Rest is being satisfied that He is satisfied. Not only is He satisfied with everything He has already done but He's satisfied with everything He is doing.

If you knew what God knew and if you had for your information everything that God knows, He knows everything actual and everything possible. If you knew what God knew and He said, "Choose a path for your life," you wouldn't change a thing. He is in control of your life. Everything He allows in your life is the Potter. Let Jesus sleep. Just trust the Lord!

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are satisfied with the finished work of creation. Thank You that You are satisfied with the

finished work of redemption. We thank You that You made a vessel that was pleasing to Your heart. Enable us to enter Your rest. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

5

REDEEMPTIVE LIVING

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON REDEEMPTIVE LIVING

I want to show that God receives glory because He is sovereign over all things. He rules the good and overrules the evil. Even when men are unwilling to cooperate with the Lord, He orchestrates it in some way to further His redemptive purposes on earth. However, there is a special glory that He receives when a Christian submits unconditionally to Him. I will attempt to define childlikeness, surrender and a heart set on His glory. Through such an instrument He lives redemptively. One hundred percent everything that God sends or allows in a dedicated Believer's life is designed to help someone discover the Redeemer. This glorifies God!

The Indispensable Principle

As we come to look in the Bible, there is a principle that we call the indispensable principle and that is total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. We cannot understand the Bible unless He shows us Jesus and only God can show the Lord. No human being, no teacher, can present the Lord apart from the Holy Spirit. I would like to begin with a Bible verse that ties into redemptive living. Psalm 67:7, "God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him." The Psalm begins the same way it ends. God blesses us so that the world might be blessed. He doesn't bless us to bless us. It's redemptive. He blesses us so that the world might fear Him. That's why He chose Israel. He wanted to put on display His heart. He gave Israel the most and the best and the highest, so others could look at Israel and see how God felt about them. He blesses us so that the world may know. That's redemptive.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank You again that we can look into Your word. We thank You that we can depend on the indwelling Holy Spirit to bring us to Jesus. Give us ears to hear and take the veil away from our heart and eyes. Show us Jesus again. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

The principle, as you know, that we're going to look at is called redemptive living. All the principles that we've been studying are foundational. It's hard to put them in order; 1, 2 & 3 because they are ALL very important. I consider this lesson, redemptive living, a great foundation. I'd like to first give a description of what I think God's word teaches about redemptive living. All things are redemptive because God is sovereign. After we look at that, I'd like to show how things are redemptive when we cooperate with God. They are redemptive even if we don't cooperate but in a special way, they are when we do cooperate.

When I say that all things are redemptive I really mean two things; that God is sovereign and He always gets what He wants. Nobody can stop His purpose. His sovereignty and Lordship are absolute. He is in perfect control of the world and everything in it. Ephesians 1:11, "...also we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will..." Job 42:2, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted." Psalm 135:6,

“Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” Psalm 103:19, “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens and His sovereignty rules over all.”

That’s the purpose; God gets what He wants but we’re calling it “redemptive purpose”. What is meant by the “redemptive” part? John 3:17, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.” God has redemption on His heart and He wants to save people. Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” It’s His heart to seek and to save that which is lost. 1 John 4:14, “And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

The Lord is in control of everything, so that He can redeem the world. Whatever happens, in some way is redemptive. 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” That’s what I mean by redemptive purpose. God controls everything to bring redemption into the world. Ephesians 1:22, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.” He works all things for the church. It’s all redemptive.

Even the wicked who are against God fulfill His purpose. A great illustration is Acts 2:23&24, “...this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” God planned the cross and wicked men put Jesus to death. Even the wickedness is redemptive.

There’s a great illustration of this in Matthew 27 when Jesus was on the cross, wicked men mocked Him but when they mocked Him they praised Him. They didn’t try to praise Him. They tried to mock Him. Matthew 27:29, “And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” They put a crown of thorns on His head and in mockery they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” But that’s actually a praise; “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Matthew 27:37, “And they put up above His head the charge against Him which read, ‘This is Jesus the King of the Jews.’” Over his head they put the cause of His death but listen to what they said,

“This is Jesus the King of the Jews.” They didn’t try to praise Him but they ended up praising Him.

Matthew 27:42, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him.” They tried to mock Him and they said, “He saved others; save Himself!” But in that mockery they confessed that He saved others. God turned the mockery into praise.

Matthew 27:43, “He trusts in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He takes pleasure in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” They said, “He says that He trusts in God and God delights in Him,” but they were mocking Him. But they also confessed that He trusts in God and He saved others and God delights in Him. They said that He said He was the Son of God. As they tried to mock Him they said, “He’s the King, He saved others, He trusts God, God delights in Him, and He’s the King of the Jews.”

I don’t know if you are familiar with Friedrich Krummacker, a German reformed theologian. He was meditating on this passage and he said, “They stoned His cross with roses.” They tried to throw stones but, instead, they just honored the Lord.

One that has become precious to me is Matthew 27:25, “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’” You know what they meant when they said, “His blood be on us and our children.” I pray that for my family. I ask the Lord to put His blood on me and my family. God will always get praise. Nobody can stop Him.

Romans 11:36, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” So, God works and controls everything in the universe for redemptive purposes. What I mean by that is that God will get the glory, even if I don’t want to give it to Him and even from rebellious people and even from Satan. Angels give Him glory. Every circumstance and every storm, everything, gives Him glory and it’s all redemptive.

When there is a calamity in the world, somebody will seek the Lord. Everything that happens is redemptive. God gets glory from the wicked and the unwilling but in a special way He gets glory if we cooperate with Him. John 15:4&5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from

Me you can do nothing.” John 15:8, “By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” He said that His Father was glorified if you bring forth much fruit.

He gets glory because He is sovereign but He gets a special glory if we agree with Him and work with Him. Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Others see your fruit and they glorify your Father.

Galatians 1:15&16, “But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood...” The Apostle Paul said that God revealed His Son in Me. Galatians 1:24, “And they were glorifying God because of me.” They were glorifying God because of Paul.

What I want to do is to look at redemptive living from the standpoint of those who want to work with God; not when we resist and not when we try to do our own thing and not when we seek our own will or glory but when we choose to glorify God. 1 Corinthians 6:19&20, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” The Holy Spirit lives in you and there is a way to glorify God. 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.”

I want to describe the redemptive life from the standpoint of those who unite with the Lord and give a description of redemptive living for those who are willing to work with God. What I would like to show you first is the indispensable condition of redemptive living. Then I want to show you the indispensable disposition of redemptive living. Then I want to show you the indispensable goal of redemptive living. If I’m going to live redemptively, I’ve got to meet this condition and it will lead to this goal.

What is the indispensable condition of redemptive living? I’ll state it for you and then I’ll try to illustrate it for you. In one word, it’s childlikeness. God demands childlikeness. Unless you are like a child

you are not going to enter. Mark 9:35-37, “And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, ‘If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and the servant of all.’ And taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me.’” He takes a little child as an illustration.

Mark 9:42, “And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.” Don’t offend a little child. Mark 10:13-16, “And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, ‘Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.’ And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them.”

Let me share the background. It’s almost comical for this occasion. Mark 9:33-34, “And they came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, ‘What were you discussing on the way?’ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.” The disciples walked in the doors and Jesus asked, “What were you talking about on the way?”

Luke 9:47, “But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their hearts, took a child and stood him by His side...” On the way to the house where Jesus was, they were arguing about who was the greatest. Use your imagination and picture this. These are rough fisherman and their tongues are not tamed yet and they are deciding which one was the best. I can hear James and John saying, “We must be favorites. He invited us to go on the Mount of Transfiguration.” I can hear Peter responding, “Which one of you ever walked on water?” I can hear Judas say, “He chose me to be treasurer. He must trust me.”

I don’t think that the fighting came to blows but I think it was heated. As they got near the house they said, “Keep it down. Cool it. We’ll discuss this later.” They came in the door and Jesus asked, “What were you talking about?” They must have been shocked to hear

that! Mark 9:34, “But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.”

When they came in He asked what they were talking about. They said, “Nothing.” They were embarrassed and blood came to their cheeks because they were discussing who was the greatest. At this point they had not received light on the exchanged life. They are still learning and they are very dull. They had no idea of childlikeness. That’s the background of when He brings in this little child.

Even today, many Christians don’t understand what it means to be childlike. They think it means that we should have the disposition of a little child but when you read the New Testament you see that God says, “Stop.” Someone says, “To be like a child is to have faith like a child.” A child will believe anything; they’ll believe in Santa Claus.

I have a jar of teeth at home. I told my grandchildren that there is no tooth fairy. So, they made me the tooth fairy. Every time they lose a tooth they want three dollars. So, I’ve got a jar of teeth and I’m getting poor. Some people say, “Have the faith of a little child.”

Ephesians 4:14&15, “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ...” Jesus said to become like a little child but don’t believe like a little child. A little child is carried about by every wind of doctrine. We have to be like a child but we can’t believe like children.

Some say that to be like a child is to be humble like a child. I had six children. They are not humble. They are very proud. Every achievement is on my refrigerator. A child is a poster child for pride. 1 Corinthians 3:1, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes to Christ.” You must become like a child but don’t believe like that. You must be like a child but don’t be humble like that.

Someone says, “Maybe it means to be simple and naïve.” 1 Corinthians 14:20, “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.” Don’t be children in your understanding. Be like a child but don’t believe like that and don’t be humble like that and don’t be childish in your thinking. What did he mean?

We've got to be childlike, so maybe we should behave like children. Matthew 11:16&17, "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'" He said to not behave like them; they are always discontent. They are fickle. One wants to play this game and the other wants to play that game. Be like a child but don't believe like a child and don't be humble like a child and don't behave like a child. What does it mean to be like a child?

I think the answer is in Luke 18:15, "And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them." They brought their babies to Jesus.

I have a book that I enjoy by a man named Kenneth Wuest. He gets into the Greek. I don't know Greek, so I'm thankful for people that can help. In this verse he translates it, "They brought their infants." Have you heard of B. B. Warfield? He was a great theologian who taught at Princeton University in New Jersey before they turned away from the Lord. He translates this as "infant of days". A mother gave Jesus an infant of days.

Just before I came to this conference, the Lord gave me my fourth great grandchild. I haven't seen him yet. He's an infant of days. That's the child that Jesus had. They are too young to have a disposition. They are too young to have faith. They are too young to be humble. They are too young to be naïve. They are too young to behave. When Jesus said that we must be like children, He wasn't talking about a disposition. He was talking about a condition, a condition of a newborn babe and its helplessness; total dependence. The indispensable condition of redemptive living is helpless dependence. Do you see that powerful illustration?

On one side you have the disciples asking, "How can we be great?" On the other side you have an infant of days; helpless dependence. That's the indispensable condition. What is the indispensable disposition that we must have? Now I'd like to share what that is.

I think it would be helpful if we used a Bible illustration. I'd like to take that illustration from the Song of Solomon. If you study the Song of Solomon it's the testimony of the bride. She does all the talking. In fact, she can't shut up. When you read the book, she does

the talking but He wrote the song. Husbands, we will write the song that our wives will sing.

In the Song of Solomon at the beginning, this woman felt very low. She kept cutting herself down. She looked at her husband and said, “He’s so wonderful that I don’t deserve him.” She’s working hard to gain His approval. She tries to make herself attractive. Then the groom says Song 4:12-15, “A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a rock garden locked, a spring sealed up. Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, henna with nard plants, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices. You are a garden spring. A well of fresh water, and streams flowing from Lebanon.”

When she heard those words, “You are my garden,” she was amazed because she thought she was the gardener. He said, “You are not the gardener; you are the garden; a garden locked and a garden enclosed.” And for the first time in the Song the bride begins to understand. The groom was saying to the bride, “I love you just the way you are. You don’t need to make yourself attractive and you don’t have to try so hard to win my approval. Up to this time it was her efforts but now she said, “I’m his garden.”

Song 4:9, “You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride; You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes, with a single strand of your necklace.” The groom said, “You make my heart skip a beat. You ravish my heart. My heart beats fast when I see you.” Do you believe that the Lord’s heart beats fast when He looks at you? His heart skips a beat. He loves you and He delights in you. That’s not flattery. Flattery is an insincere complement. This is how He really feels.

When she understood that she was his garden and that he loved her, she prayed a prayer that I’m calling the indispensable disposition. Song 4:16, “Awake, O north wind, and come, wind of the south; make my garden breathe out fragrance, let it’s spices be wafted abroad. May my beloved come into this garden and eat its choice fruits!”

Listen to the bride’s prayer. She said, “Wake up north wind and blow on my garden.” What is the north wind? That’s a chilly wind and that’s frosty wind. That pictures hard times and affliction. She said, “I’m his garden; north wind come blow on the garden.” She’s not only asking the north wind but she’s begging the north wind. Then she thinks about it and she says, “Wake up south wind.” The south wind is

prosperity and blessing. It's health and it's goodness. Here is the bride's disposition. She said, "I'm his garden. I don't care if it's the north wind or the south wind. It's whatever pleases him." That becomes the disposition. It doesn't matter if it's the north wind or the south wind. If he's happy, blow on my garden.

This is more than resignation. She's not just accepting the north wind. She's inviting the north wind to blow. She desires whatever will please him. The disposition is that it doesn't matter. If there's no blowing, there's no flowing. As the indispensable condition is childlikeness, the indispensable disposition is absolute surrender.

What is the goal of all of this? John 12:20&21, "Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'" First there's childlikeness, then there's surrender and now is the redemptive part. The Greeks came to Philip and said, "We want to see Jesus." Was it curiosity? Why did they come? Did they come to argue? We don't know. Were they really seeking the Lord? Perhaps. The only thing God calls attention to is the response of Jesus. When you look at it with our physical eyes it looks like He ignored them. He never went out to talk to them. He only talked to the disciples. Jesus explained to the disciples about redemptive living.

John 12:27&28, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." There came therefore a voice out of heaven, 'I have both glorified it. And will glorify it again.'" Jesus always talked about the cross as His "hour". He said that My hour has not yet come. He always thought about the hour. But in this prayer He said, "My soul is troubled. What shall I say? Deliver Me from this hour? For this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

Every hour in the life of Jesus He said, "Glorify Thy name." I choose verses every chance I get. I have a year verse and I have a life verse and I have a birthday verse; every chance I get I get a verse. This is my life verse. Something comes into my life, a north wind or a south wind, what shall I say, "Deliver me from this hour? For this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

So, the north wind blows and there is a loss. "For this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." A disappointment comes

in or a sickness comes in or a grief comes in or a time of suffering comes in; “What should I say, ‘Deliver me?’ For this cause I came to this hour. Glorify Thy name.” Sometimes it’s prosperity that blows in; wonderful health, good times, opportunities, open doors, provision. “What shall I say, ‘Deliver me from this hour?’ For this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” That is the goal of childlikeness. Everything is moving toward, “Glorify thy name.”

We are the Lord’s garden and we invite any wind that will make Him happy. That’s fine. Redemptive living is not me living for Jesus. When He lived on earth in His incarnate body He went to the cross. He went to the cross to reach the world. It’s the same Jesus and He now lives in my heart. If He went to the cross in His first body, where is He going in His new body? He’s going to the cross. He lives in me; it’s not about me. It’s not about you. It’s about redemption. Everything that comes into your life, you just please Him and He reaches the world. You are not out to reach the world. You live to please the Lord. When you please the Lord He will reach the world.

That’s why my life is so exciting now. It wasn’t always this way. When I was young I prayed, “Deliver me.” As He opened my eyes more I say, “Keep me.” But now I don’t care if He delivers or keeps. Now I say, “Father, glorify thy name.” My wife has muscular dystrophy. It’s missionary muscular dystrophy. I have congestive heart failure. It’s missionary congestive heart failure. It’s all about missions. It’s all about others. It’s not about us.

Some people have missionary singleness. Some people have missionary cancer. It doesn’t matter whether it’s the north wind or the south wind. Sometimes when Jesus lives in you He’ll go to the hospital. That’s exciting! What is He up to?

In Acts 16 it was the same. They tried to go north and the Spirit closed the door. They tried to go south and the Spirit closed the door. Then they got a dream to go to Macedonia and when they got to Macedonia they found Lydia and God opened her heart. And then a demon possessed woman came and the town came against Paul and Silas and they beat him. He didn’t send out prayer letters saying, “Pray for me.” He said, “This is wonderful! What is God up to?” Then they dragged him across the street and then they put him in a dungeon and in the dungeon they sang praises to the Lord. Then God gave an earthquake and then the jailor said, “What must I do to be saved?” It’s all redemptive. Therefore, it’s exciting. I wake up excited. “What is

God going to do today?” If He wants to have missionary forgetfulness, He can have it (I have dementia).

Jesus in His first body allowed Himself to get weary and He sat down by a well and along came the Samaritan woman. He’s now in His new body and maybe we’ll get weary. It’s okay. It’s redemptive. He knows where the Ethiopian is. So, off goes Philip. He knows where the Samaritan woman is. He knows where the tax gatherer is. He knows where Zaccheus’ tree is. He knows who is meditating under the fig tree. He’ll take some to the athletic field and He’ll take some to a mission field and He’ll take some to the hospital. We need to be little children; helpless and dependent. We need to be totally surrendered. It doesn’t matter whether it is a north wind or south wind, as long as He is happy. The goal is that He will reach others through us.

John 12:32&33, “‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.” He said, “The Greeks want to see Me? Then I must go to the cross. I must become a grain of wheat that must die. Then, not only Greeks will come but everybody will come. If I’m lifted up I’ll draw all men unto Me.”

Psalms 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.” Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Ezekiel 33:11, “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’”

The Lord takes no delight in the death of the ungodly. Precious is my death. What that means is I’m dispensable. He may let me die so that they may live. He may let me go through a trial that they may hear. He may allow me to lose a loved one, so that they can see a response of a Christian.

One more illustration and then I’ll finish. Ezekiel 2:9&10, “Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it. When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back; and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.” Picture in your mind a hand coming out of heaven and in that hand is a scroll and it’s written on both sides and it’s all bad news. It’s lamentations, mourning and woe.

Ezekiel 3:1, “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’” God says,

“Eat it.” That’s hard to swallow! It’s only bad news. Ezekiel couldn’t do it. Ezekiel 3:2, “So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.” Sometimes God will hand down that north wind with only bad news and He’ll say, “Eat it!” You say, “I can’t! It’s too hard.” He says, “I’ll feed you.”

Ezekiel 3:3, “And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.’ Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.” When he ate it, it became as sweet as honey.

“What shall I say, ‘Deliver me from this hour?’ For this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” There is only one list; north wind or south wind. It doesn’t matter, as long as He is pleased. Redemptive living is me pleasing Him and Him reaching the world.

2 Corinthians 4:7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves...” The treasure is in this vessel and sometimes He breaks the vessel so that the treasure can be seen. Look carefully, please, at 2 Corinthians 4:10, “...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” Carrying in the body the dying of Jesus; it’s not the dying of self. Many Christians are so busy trying to die to themselves. That happened two thousand years ago. Believe it. It’s over. You don’t need to die to self. You need to reckon yourself dead. But now you carry the dying of Jesus in order that the Life of Jesus may be manifest.

2 Corinthians 4:11&12, “For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.” Redemptive living is letting Jesus live in our lives. We are the bride and we are His garden. Whatever pleases Him to reach others, let it come. In everything we can thank God because He is reaching the world.

The indispensable condition is childlikeness; helpless dependence. The indispensable disposition is total surrender. The indispensable goal is, “Father, glorify thy name.”

Our Father, we thank You so much for Your word, not what we think it means but everything that You have inspired it to mean. Work in our hearts what You know this means. We thank You that You are doing it right now. In Jesus’ name. Amen

6

FRUIT

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON FRUIT

I want to show that the chief difference between works and fruit is the origin. Generally, works are the product of man; fruit is the product of God. The only legitimate explanation for a Believer is God. The Christian life is a miracle from start to finish. The Christian life cannot depend upon the programs of man. Personality, formal training, experience, and natural talents are not the essence of the Christian's life. What He does through me is fruit. Whatever is not a fruit of the Spirit is worthless. Without abiding in Jesus as the branch abides in the vine, we can do nothing; that is, nothing that is called fruit.

The Indispensable Principle

I'm sorry that I can't speak or understand French. But I did understand when Frederic said, "Ed," that it was my turn to speak. Maybe some of you can't speak English but there is a language that we both know and that's when the Lord speaks to our hearts. That's my prayer, that we will be able to understand the things of the Lord.

As we come to the study of God's word, I want to share a principle that is absolutely indispensable. You can't live without it. You can't take it for granted. I'm talking about total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. Many things will help you study the Bible. There are many books, commentaries, word studies, atlases and all kinds of help but at the end of the day we need to come as little children before the Lord. Only God can reveal God. No man and no ministry can reveal God. We've come to hear the Lord. The Lord told us that every word that comes out of His mouth will not return void. He never said that every word that comes out of Ed Miller's mouth will not return void. I'll pray that He'll protect you from what I say, so that you can hear what He says. With that in mind, I'd like to take a look at John 15:4, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

Our heavenly Father, we thank You for this revelation, that You are the vine and we are the branches and when we draw life from You we get fruit. When we produce fruit, you get glory. Work that in our hearts. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

As we gather for these studies, we're stressing great foundations of our faith. I'd like to stress today the truth of what it means to bring forth fruit. When we have real fruit, He's glorified. Our Lord Jesus spoke of two houses that looked very much alike. If you look with our physical eyes you couldn't tell the difference but He explained that one had a foundation on sand and one had a foundation on rock. With these eyes you couldn't see the foundation. So, they look like they are the same, until the storm came. And when the rain came the house on the sand fell down.

There are two words that look very much the same. The first word is the word "works". The other word is the word "fruit". Sometimes works and fruit look very much the same. In Galatians

5:19, God describes the works of the flesh, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are; immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

In chapter 5:22 he talks about the fruit of the Spirit, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Sometimes those two things look alike. If you look at someone’s life is it works or is it fruit? Sometimes the works of the flesh are bad works; immorality, impurity, anger, jealousy, envy, arguing. The works of the flesh are not good. But sometimes the works of the flesh are good.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

Those verses describe a person that never existed. You’ve never met a person like that. Let me, again, describe that person. It’s somebody who speaks with the tongues of men and angels. Have you ever met anybody like that? It’s somebody, the Bible says, that has a gift of prophecy and knows all mystery. Did you ever meet anyone like that? That person is described as someone who knows everything and has all knowledge. I never met anybody like that. I don’t think you have met anybody like that either. Not only does he speak like an angel and knows every mystery, has knowledge about everything and you can’t ask a question that he can’t answer, but the description is larger. It says that he has all faith so that he can move mountains, literally. This is an amazing person.

And there is more. It describes his surrender. It says that he took everything he had, sold it and gave it to the poor. That’s amazing. He’s not finished. Then he gave his own body as a martyr to be burned. What kind of surrender is that? He speaks with the tongues of angels, he knows every mystery, he knows everything about everything and he has faith to move mountains and he surrenders everything he has and

gives it to the poor and then he gives his body to be burned. How does the Holy Spirit describe him? He's described as being like a noisy gong; a cymbal. And it says that he profits nothing. God says that he didn't have love.

Love is the fruit of the Spirit. He did all those things but he didn't have love. Those were wonderful works but they weren't fruit. The house built on the sand did not have a foundation. The difference between works and fruit is the source of works or fruit. What is the origin of all that display? Does it come from man or does it come from the Lord?

If it comes from the Lord it's called "fruit". If it comes from man it's called "works". It's like law and grace. Law is what I do. Grace is what God does. We want to study fruit. It's true that there are a couple of exceptions. That is, sometimes works and fruit look so much alike that you can change the words. Like Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." That they may see your good works; but those works are fruit. So, sometimes works and fruit are the same. James 2:26, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." Faith without works is dead. Sometimes, not often, works can be fruit.

I love Hosea 14:8, "O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit." God says, "From Me comes fruit." So, we want to talk about the origin. Since you've been a Christian, everything that you did in your own strength profits nothing. It means nothing. That's why we started with the vine and the branch. Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." But there is a lot I can do without Him; but nothing that is called "fruit". I need to abide in Him to have fruit.

I want to give three illustrations to show the idea of the origin of our life. Colossians 2:6&7, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude." The Lord Jesus is called our soil. We are rooted in Him. What soil is to a plant, Jesus is to us. The plant draws from the soil and produces.

Another illustration is Isaiah 37:31, “And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.” If you bear fruit upward, you bear root downward.

In the first illustration Jesus is like soil. John 15:4&5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.” The soil is the source of the flower. The vine is the source of the grape.

Romans 7:2-4, “For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.” God says that we are married to the One who rose from the dead to bring fruit unto God. In each case the soil, the vine and the marriage, the fruit comes from God.

I have six children and nineteen grandchildren and four great grandchildren. You are all old enough to know that it came from a very intimate union with my wife. That produces fruit. The origin is what determines the fruit. 2 Corinthians 4:10&11, “...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” We carry the death of Christ, so that His life might come forth.

We ask, “How can we really experience this fruit?” You might have already experienced it when someone comes to you and they say, “How could you forgive that person?” You know that is the Lord. “How can you have peace when that came into your life? How can you be thankful for that thing?” The answer is the Lord.

We’ve got the description of fruit and that it comes from God. Let me give a Bible story that illustrates that. Acts 3:1-9, “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, and they used to set him down every day at

the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began to ask to receive alms. And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and they said, 'Look at us!' He began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!' And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God..."

This is the wonderful miracle with John and Peter at the Beautiful gate but they got into a lot of trouble for that story. I want to read part of the prayer at the end of the story in Acts 4:29-31, "'And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.' And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness."

I want to take that scripture and put it in my own words. It's easy to picture in your mind because this man was lame from the time he was born. It appears that a courtesy was taken and somebody helped this man in front of the temple. We know from Acts 4:22 that he was more than forty years old. Year after year picture him sitting there begging for alms for money. That's all he got every day. Up until this point, all he had ever received had never helped him. He was crying out for something that kept him in the same condition. It did not cure him. That's a tragedy; a man full of sympathy and is born crippled and he sits in front of the church as God's people are walking by.

It's very sad if all we have to offer is something that keeps you like you were before you heard. Thank God that one day God interrupted that picture! That lame man expected to be lame that night, as he was all his yesterdays. Everybody was filing by and then Peter and John filed by. Verse 5 said that he looked up expecting to receive something. He had no idea what he would receive. He thought he would just get a coin or two. He expected to be the same that night that

he was the day before. But this day his life would be changed forever. Peter and John were different. They weren't different in what they had.

Every Christian has Christ. Not every Christian knows it. Some don't rely upon it. They have Christ but they don't depend upon the Lord. Acts 3:4, "And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, 'Look at us!'" Peter said, "Look at us!" What was he saying? Was he saying, "We are the answer to your problem? Look at us. We're important. We have what you need. Look at us." I know he didn't mean that because of Acts 3:12, "But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, 'Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?'" Peter said, "Look at us." And then when they accused him he said, "Why are you looking at us?" When he said, "Look at us, he didn't mean that." He said, "Look at us and see somebody else. See Jesus. We can't do this in our own power. We can't make a lame man walk."

Peter and John were conscious that Christ was living in their lives. Jesus had come to live again, but now in His church. Our Lord Jesus, when He lived on earth for thirty three and a half years, said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." Now, you are a Christian. Others should look at you and if they see you, they should have seen Christ. If they see me, they've seen Christ.

I want you to picture the scene as it happens. Acts 3:7, "And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened." The point I want you to see is that Peter, the big fisherman, reached down with his right hand and grabbed him by the hand and stood him on his feet. Later when he prayed in Acts 4:30, "...while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." He prays, "Lord, keep reaching forth Your hand to heal." Whose hand was it? Was it Peter's hand or the Lord's hand? The answer is yes, it was both. "Don't look at us; look at us! I'll reach my hand but it's not my hand. It's the Lord living in me reaching through me." That's fruit. That is the source from the Lord.

I want to show you how powerful that miracle was. Acts 3:2, "And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those

who were entering the temple.” He was lame from his mother’s womb. Acts 4:22, “...for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.”

First steps are a big deal in my family. I watched my children learn to walk. I watch my grandchildren learn to walk. I have a great grandson I haven’t seen yet. He’s brand new but it’s exciting to see them learn to walk. This man was lame from his mother’s womb. He never learned to walk. Think of that! He never took one step! And the first step he took is Acts 3:8, “And with a leap, he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.” Can you imagine that?

If my little grandchild all of a sudden stood up and began to dance around and praise the Lord, it would be an amazing miracle! Fruit is a miracle and it’s every bit as big as that miracle. If someone does wrong to you, you should forgive them. You can’t forgive them. God has to work in your heart a forgiveness and not just suppressing it and not talking about it but replacing it with love. That’s a miracle!

“Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.” That’s impossible without a miracle. This is the kind of miracle we need when we have fruit. When something comes into your life that is not pleasant, when you get that doctor’s report or when your creature comforts fail, you aren’t just to say, “I accept it. Thank You.” You are to leap and to rejoice and say, “Thank You, Lord!” If you see a Christian live like that, that’s fruit!

Sometimes Christians are called to take care of the elderly and that’s not always pleasant. It can drain your resources. You need a miracle. I took care of my stepfather. He was very mean. One time my wife made a meal and he said, “Give that to the dogs.” My wife didn’t say anything but I saw that she was very hurt. I would walk into his room and he would argue with me and be stubborn and would not let me help him. When I walked out of the room, Lillian could tell if I was trusting the Lord or not. I would leave the room so angry and my face was red. So, the Lord gave me a prayer. I would stop every day at the door before I went in and I would say, “Thy life for my life in this.” I said it so many times that now the grandchildren say it.

My grandson was ready to play baseball and the coach took him out of the game and he prayed, “Thy life for mine in this.” We need the Lord’s life. Fruit is a mighty miracle of God. I had to walk into

my stepfather's room. It was my hand but it was the Lord's hand. This is real fruit.

When Peter did that miracle, he took no glory for that. Acts 3:6, "But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you; In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene; walk!'" Acts 3:16, "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in presence of you all."

Acts 4:7, "And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, 'By what power, or in what name, have you done this?'" Acts 4:10, "...let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead – by this name this man stands here before you in good health." Acts 5:40-41, "And they took his advice; and after calling the apostle in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, may God help us to see this; who we really are! Peter was not representing the Lord from a distant country. The Lord was living in Peter's heart. It's not God in heaven and Peter on earth acting as a representative. Peter wasn't acting on God's authority. The Lord was acting on His own authority. It was the Lord that did that and that's the miracle life.

As the soil is related to the plant, as the branch is related to the vine, as the wife is related to the husband, so then we can produce fruit. If your life can be explained in any other way but God, you haven't understood the message. If someone looks at your life and says, "Oh, he's that way because he has a good personality. He's that way because he had a good education. He's had a lot of experience. He has a good program. He has spiritual discipline. He gets up early and he prays and he reads his Bible. He knows how to fast." If someone explains your life that way, you don't understand fruit. Fruit comes from God and it requires a miracle. That was illustrating works by the life of God. He not only produces works but He manifests Himself. I want to give one more illustration.

Acts 6:5, about Stephen, "And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochours, Nicanor, Timon,

Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.” Acts 6:8, “And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.” Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, full of power, full of faith and full of grace.

In order to get this illustration before your hearts, I want to go back in the life of our Lord Jesus. He came as far as He could come in the body God gave Him through the virgin. I’m referring to when Jesus was hanging on the cross. He spoke, you know, seven times. No one can deny that those were the words of a crucified man. I’m saying it that way because if you are a Christian, you are a crucified person. So, through the words of a crucified man you should be able to say those words because we are crucified with Christ.

I’m not going to go through all seven words but I want to give you the terminal points. What was the first word that Jesus said when He was on the cross? What was the last word that He said when He was on the cross? The first word is in Luke 23:34, “But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.” “Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.” Those are the words of a crucified man; to be able to say to someone doing that, “Father, forgive them.” His last words are in Luke 23:46, “And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit.’” This is a heart of forgiveness, a heart trusting God with His last breath and with total surrender.

I want to go back to Stephen, a man full of wisdom, full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, full of grace, full of power, full of the life of the Lord. You know the story of Stephen. He was sharing the word of God and they didn’t receive it well. Acts 7:54-60, “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him, but being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ And falling on

his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ And having said this, he fell asleep.”

Do those words sound familiar? When Stephen was dying he said, “Father, forgive them.” When Stephen was dying he said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Those were the words of a crucified man. It sounds a lot like Jesus. When angry men are throwing stones at you, you don’t say, “Father, forgive them.” You know the natural heart like I know the natural heart. How could he do that? Was he saying, “I’m a Christian and I’m supposed to turn the other cheek. I better act like a Christian because I am a Christian.” That was not possible.

Stephen’s heart was full of forgiveness. Stephen was not repeating the words of Jesus. It sounds like Jesus because it was Jesus. Jesus was in his heart and he now had the character of the Lord. That’s fruit; when you are made like Jesus and when you are conformed into His likeness. That takes a miracle. Stephen was not some puppet that the Lord was putting words in his mouth.

I’m sure Stephen was so focused on Christ that he was distracted from being stoned. This is an amazing miracle. Acts. 7:58 says that they laid the robes of the ones who were stoning him at Saul’s feet, “And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” When Stephen was dying, I don’t think he was saying, “I hope the Lord uses this redemptively.” He was too busy seeing Jesus. It was all automatic. It was fruit. Fruit is intuitive. We don’t have to think about it. He didn’t think about forgiving. He didn’t think about surrender. He was like Jesus. It came naturally. He had a forgiving heart. He had a surrendered heart.

I don’t think Stephen saw who was holding the garments. I don’t think he knew that the number one enemy of Christ was holding some of the garments. The number one enemy of Christ was the Apostle Paul and he became the number one friend of Christ.

If God has ever blessed you through the writings of Paul and his thirteen epistles, bow your head and thank God for Stephen. God used Stephen to lead Paul to Christ. That’s fruit. He wasn’t trying to have fruit. He was just looking at Jesus. He was enjoying the Lord but God was reaching out through Him.

It wasn’t just Paul that got saved that day. Stephen’s death, the Bible says, ignited a persecution. It was because of Stephen. Christians were scattered like seeds and a great revival in Samaria took place. And

in Ethiopia God saved people and the gospel went to Africa. Thousands were saved in Antioch. Through Cornelius the gospel went to Caesarea.

Stephen just enjoyed the Lord. The Lord was his life. Fruit is not only works that come from you but it transforms you and you become like the Lord Jesus. This is what is on my heart to share with you. The origin must be the Lord. There can be no other explanation for your life than that God did it.

How can I accept that trial? God did it. How can I have joy in this situation? God did it. How can I be thankful? The Lord does it. How can I let my loved one go and go to heaven? The Lord must do it. While you are looking to the Lord and you are enjoying the Lord, God is producing fruit. Fruit does not belong to the tree. What is an apple tree going to do with apples? Fruit is for somebody else. So, as we just look to Jesus, His life will flow through us.

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your word. Work in our hearts everything You've inspired that to mean. Teach us to have a miracle life for Your glory. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

7

VICTORY

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON VICTORY

I desire to show how Jesus alone has victory. Our only hope for victory over the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is the fact that the victorious One lives in my heart. He is the overcomer and He lives in me. The enemy is far too strong for me to go to war with him. Jesus did not win the victory as my example; He won the victory as my Substitute. All that He has, does and is, belongs to me by faith in Jesus. If I seek a victory of my own, I will be frustrated and disappointed. The battle over my flesh is His and not mine!

The Indispensable Principle

Once again as we come to prepare to look into the word of the Lord I remind you of an indispensable principle; total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. The Bible is like the Lord Jesus. It's both human and divine. There's a human side and there's a divine side. If we only see the human, we miss everything. Only God can show us the divine side. Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

God doesn't give His Son and something else called "peace". He doesn't give His Son and something else called "power". He doesn't give Himself and something else called "joy". If you have Christ you have peace. If you have Christ you have joy. If you have Christ you have power. If you run after joy, peace or power you'll find nothing. You'll only get frustrated. Let's pray together and ask the Lord to focus our eyes on Christ.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that you have put Your Holy Spirit in our life, a Bible Teacher living in our hearts, One who searches the depths of God and reveals Him to us. Take the veil away, Lord. Take the veil away. Enable us to see Christ in a living way. In Jesus' name. Amen

We are looking at the great foundations of our faith. What I'd like to share now is the truth of victory in Jesus. What could be more foundational than knowing how we can have victory in Christ Jesus? Some people, when they think about victory, only think of indwelling sin, "I'm a Christian and I still struggle with sin. Is there victory over indwelling sin? Of course, the answer is yes but there is victory that is larger than that.

I want to choose one word that the Holy Spirit chooses to describe this victory. I want to use the word "world". How much is included in the word "world"? If we could have victory over the world, we would have victory indeed! I would like to show you the Lord's provision for us for victory over the world.

The Bible uses the word "world" in several different ways. I'll mention a couple of them and then we'll look at the summary. John 15:18&19, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its

own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” This is the world of sinners. We live in a world of people that don’t believe in the Lord; ungodly people who persecute Christians. Is there victory over that? We’re strangers here. We’re pilgrims here but we have to live in a world of sinners.

There is another use of the word for “world” in Mark 4:18&19, “And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” This is Solomon’s word, “All is vanity in this world.” It has no value. Abraham was a millionaire but he never owned anything except that he bought a grave. That’s all this world has to offer. There is nothing else. There’s victory over the things of this world.

Then there is James 4:4, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” This is the world’s ideas and the world’s methods. This is humanism and the values of the world and what they think is important.

Let me give you a summary and it’s in 1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves 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 boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

I’m sure you are all familiar with that passage. “All that’s in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” I don’t know how it is in France but in America, depending on where you go, they have a different list. They say, “Don’t be worldly. Don’t smoke and don’t drink and don’t gamble and don’t play contact sports and don’t use dice.” Anyway, they all have their own standard of holiness. But God includes more under the word “world” than Christians do. God includes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

On one side you have the world. What is the opposite of the world? Listen to 1 John 2:17, “And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.” It’s an amazing contrast. It’s either the world or the will of God. Every time

I don't do the will of God, I'm worldly. It's not just a list that some people keep. It's missing the will of God.

2 Corinthians 2:14, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." He always leads us in triumph. Romans 8:37, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." Is such a life possible and are we in everything conquerors; not just having life but abundant life?

Let me share God's provision for victory. Galatians 6:14, "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." The Apostle Paul saw himself as crucified to the world. The key verse is John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

"Take courage. I have overcome the world." Let me break it down. "I have overcome the lust of the flesh. I have overcome the lust of the eyes. I have overcome the pride of life." Let me say it another way. Jesus claimed that He has overcome everything that stands between you and the will of God. Do you realize what a provision that is? There is nothing between you and the will of God; nothing in heaven, nothing on the earth, and nothing under the earth. Nothing can hinder you from doing the will of God. If that is not victory, I don't know what is, that God has already overcome everything between me and the will of God.

Notice that He didn't say, "Be of good cheer, you shall overcome." He said, "I have overcome." Christians always want to be overcomers but He is the overcomer. This is the most glorious news that can ever reach the ear of a burdened Christian. I'm in Christ and all that is in Him belongs to me. I just want to have that verse read again. John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." In the world you'll have tribulation. You are in the world. You are also in Christ. In Christ, He has overcome the world. Once again, God doesn't give His Son and something called "victory".

Romans 6:8-11, “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.” He is dead to sin and alive to God. I want to be dead to sin and alive to God but He is not going to allow me to be dead to sin and alive to God because He will not give His glory to another. He is dead to sin and alive to God and I’m in Him. He’s dead to sin and alive to God and you are in Him.

I can’t fly. The airplane flies. I’m in the airplane; I fly. Everything that is in Christ is yours. Everything that is in Christ belongs to me. He’s the Son of God. You are sons of God. He’s righteous. You have been made the righteousness of God in Him. He’s an overcomer. So are you; in Him. He’s elect and so are you because you are in Christ Jesus. Everything He has belongs to you.

I hope God has taught your heart that when He died you died. When He rose from the dead, you rose from the dead. When He ascended into heaven, you ascended into heaven. When He sat down at the right hand of God, you were seated with Him. You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

So, what is victory? Victory is Jesus. It’s a Person. It’s the Lord Himself. He has overcome the world. He has overcome the world of sinners. He’s overcome the world of all the vanity in the world. He’s overcome all the methods that the world uses. All that is in the world that stands between you and the will of God, He has already overcome. There’s only one Person who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus. And there is only one Person who can ever live it again. It’s not you. It’s Jesus. That’s why He lives in you and me; to share His victory. If you look for your own victory you will be sadly disappointed.

Some people read Romans 7, the great struggle, and they think that’s Paul’s testimony and every Christian will struggle until he gets to heaven. That’s not what Romans 7 is about. The Apostle Paul went further in the flesh than any person that has ever lived. He tried to live the Christian life on his own. He went further than you or I ever tried. When he was all done he said, “I love God and I love His will. I hate sin and I can’t perform.” Imagine loving God, hating sin and not being able to perform! He gave his testimony and said, “Don’t go there. That won’t work.”

Romans 7 is not how to live the Christian life. Romans 8 is how to live the Christian life. If you try, you'll get to Romans 7:24, "Wretched man that I am. Who is going to deliver me?" How do you get out of Romans 7 and get into Romans 8? Romans 7:25, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin." How do I get out of Romans 7 and into Romans 8? I say, "Thank You." That's it; you just say, "Thank You." He's done it all! He's the overcomer! He has overcome everything between you and the will of God.

To enjoy victory is to enjoy Jesus. Now, that's the theology. Let me give you an illustration from the Old Testament. I'll set it up with a verse from the New Testament, Colossians 1:13, "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." There are two kingdoms; the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. He said, "I translated you into the kingdom of God." He gives us a picture of that in Daniel 2.

Daniel 2 was that great dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 2:19, 22 & 23, "Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven... It is He who reveals the profound and the hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To Thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for Thou hast given me wisdom and power. Even now Thou hast made known to me what we requested of Thee, for Thou hast made known to us the king's matter."

Remember that Nebuchadnezzar said, "Tell me the dream and the interpretation." Daniel's only hope was to call on the Lord and he called on the Lord. Here is the dream. Daniel 2:31-36, "You, O king, were looking and behold there was a single great statue; that statue which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck them was found. But the stone that struck the statue

became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king.”

It was a dream of a giant man. He had a head made out of gold and he had shoulders that were made out of silver and his middle was made out of bronze and his legs were made out of iron and his feet were made out of clay and iron that were mixed together, and as God interpreted that, He said, “That’s the kingdoms of the world.” The head is a picture of Babylon. The silver is a picture of the Medes and the Persians. The bronze is a picture of Greece. Rome is the legs. Then sometime in the future the ten toes are ten kingdoms or something like that. What I want you to see is that it was the image of a man; an awesome image of a man.

There was a second part to the dream and it had to do with the little stone coming out of heaven. The stone hit the foot of the image and you know the rest of the story. I’m suggesting what we read in Colossians is in Daniel 2. I think there were two kingdoms. You might say, “I thought there were four kingdoms, and maybe more if you have the confederations of ten nations.” There were two kingdoms; the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God. That’s why it’s an image of a man. It’s one image with many parts but only one image; the kingdom of man.

I want victory over me. I want victory over the kingdom of man. I want victory over the flesh. The New Testament calls it “the old man”, the “old nature”, “the old Adam”, “the carnal man”, “the flesh”, “Esau”, “Ishmael” and “Agag”. It’s all the same thing. It’s the kingdom of the flesh. Let me give you what I think is the spiritual message. Daniel 2:31, “You, O king, were looking and behold there was a single great statue; that statue which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you and its appearance was awesome.” He saw a great image. It was extraordinarily large. How tall was it? We get a hint in his second dream.

Daniel 4:10-11, “Now, these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed; I was looking and behold, there was a tree in the midst of earth, and its height was great. And its height reached to the sky and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. The tree grew large and became strong.” He has a picture of a tree that reached to heaven and the branches reached to the ends of the earth. That’s a big tree!

He said that the head of the image was made of gold. He used the word “great image”; it was a great tree that reached to the heavens

and to the ends of the earth. How great was this image that He made? That was only a picture of the head, not the whole image. According to Daniel 3:1 it was sixty cubits, or about ninety feet high. Just understand that this was very big, very impressive, very large and very scary. When we think about our own sin nature and we want victory over it. It's very big, very large, and very impressive and it's very scary. If you have ever struggled with the flesh, you know how big it is.

When you look at the image, it's just an image. In other words, it's a statue. It's not alive. Gold glitters but it's dead. Silver sparkles but it's dead. You can shine brass but it's dead. Iron is strong but there is no life in it. When you are wrestling the flesh you forget that it's not real. It's a kingdom of stone. That's all it is. As you look more and more you see the value decreases as you get to the foundation. This image of man has a fading glory. Gold is more valuable than silver and silver is more valuable than brass and brass is more valuable than iron and iron is more valuable than clay mixed with iron. With these eyes it looks so big and it looks so scary; but it's dead! Jesus took you to the cross and there is no value in it at all. As you look at the image of man you say, "How can we deal with that image? It's too big for me."

One time I was studying with a friend and he finds principles everywhere. I asked my friend, "Why does God tell us that Goliath had six toes on each foot?" And his answer was, "To teach us that we cannot stand toe to toe with the enemy!" When we see the flesh we can't handle it. You can't fight Satan. That's why Jesus did it for you. He didn't do it once as your example. He did it as your substitute, so that you don't have to do it. The war is over.

Daniel 2:34 & 35, "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." God showed Daniel a little stone coming out of heaven, a stone not made with hands. The stone hit feet of the image of man and the stone began to grow. And it continued to grow until it filled the whole earth.

What do you call a stone that grows? You call it a "living stone". As it grows, it's alive. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus and the Lord

Jesus is the only One that can deal with that image. He comes down and He hits the very foundation and as that thing falls down, He begins to grow. He's the living stone.

That will be true when Jesus comes back again someday. That was true when Jesus died on the cross. That was true when Jesus came into your heart. He struck at the image of man and brought it down and now He's filling your life; growing and growing and growing. Did you notice that there was a lot of dust? The Bible says that the wind came and blew it away. Do you know what the wind is a picture of in the Bible? It's the Holy Spirit of God. Do you see what God is saying for your life and mine? He's saying, "Don't deal with that big image. I'll deal with it and what I knock down, the Holy Spirit will blow away." You don't have to try to clean up your life. You don't have to struggle to get into the will of God. He has overcome everything between you and the will of God.

When God comes into your life and strikes at the foundation and a lot of dust comes from that crash, don't think that is the dust from the devil. That's not dust from the devil. That's the dust from the Lord. When He cleanses the temple, He makes a mess. We call it "a cleansing" but the tables are upside down, the animals are running all over the place, and money is all over the floor. That's how my children used to clean their rooms. They said that they cleaned it but it didn't look clean.

When the Lord Jesus deals with some sin, some flesh in your life, He's replacing that kingdom with His and as that comes down, His kingdom grows and the Lord Jesus will fill the whole landscape of your life. What is victory? Victory is Jesus. You have Jesus. He has authority and you have Him. You don't have authority. He has all authority and you have none. You have Him. You don't have victory. You have Him. He is your victory. You don't have to deal with the flesh. He does. When He does, the Holy Spirit blows it away.

This is a process as you go on in the Lord. Jesus knocks it down and the Holy Spirit blows it away. That is the life of victory. I hope every brother and sister here knows Christ as their victory. You have Him and you need nothing else. Pull out all the stops and believe it with all of your heart. There's nothing between you and the will of God. This very moment you can be in the center of the circle of the perfect will of God. Just say, "Thank You." He did it all. As soon as

you say, “Thank You,” He takes you out of Romans 7 and He brings you into Romans 8 where there is no condemnation.

Father, thank You for Your victory. Lord, we just ask You to make that real in our lives. Work thanksgiving in our hearts. Translate us from the kingdom of the enemy to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of Your love. We ask in Jesus’ name. Amen

8

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

I desire to show that by the free grace of God, every Christian will eventually be conformed to Christ. I will attempt to show, by the principle of seeds producing after their kind, why, having the SEED of God planted in our hearts, guarantees the final result. I will show how the process continues by our continually gazing on Jesus and how it is brought to completion at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where everything that is contrary to conformity with Jesus is burned up.

Indispensable Principle

Once again as we come to look in God's word, there is a principle of bible study that is absolutely indispensable; that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. The Bible is God's book. Only God can reveal God. He promised that if we come as little children He would reveal it to us. We don't need to come in an academic way. We don't study the bible to know the Bible. We study the Bible to know the Lord. If our hearts are open to see the Lord, God will meet us.

This morning I'd like to look at the great foundation of conformity to Christ. What does it mean to be made like Jesus? I want to give a Bible verse and then I'll pray. John 1:42, "He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas (which translated means Peter).'" I want to focus on these words "you are" and "you shall be"; "You are Cephas; you will be Peter." That is what we want to look at, that change. God will take me from what I am to where He wants me. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You again for the indwelling Holy Spirit. We know that it is Your delight to show us Jesus. Take the veil off our eyes, we pray, and take the veil off our minds, we pray and take the veil off our heart, we pray and show us the Lord Jesus. We thank You. In Jesus' name. Amen

We've come to look at that wonderful truth; what it means to be conformed to the Lord Jesus. That is a big truth. Usually the way it is approached, the theologians call "sanctification". Sanctification deals with our progress in the Christian life. Usually when you talk about sanctification you are talking about holiness, Godliness, separation and surrender. Some people say that if you are going to study conformity, you've got to study what it means to grow in Christ. 2 Peter 3:18, "...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen"

I think the Apostle John might have had that in mind when he wrote 1 John. He addresses fathers. He addresses young men and he addresses children. Perhaps Jesus had that idea of growth in Mark 4:28,

“The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.”

We want to be conformed to Jesus. We want to be like Him. Ephesians 4:13, “...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” We want to grow up in Christ. Galatians 4:19, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you..” We don’t want to get all confused about being like Jesus. I don’t want to talk all about sanctification. I don’t want to talk about the steps in how you grow in Jesus. I want to look at what it means to become like Jesus in the simplest way possible.

If you like outlines, here’s the outline. First I want to give the starting point of being like Jesus. The starting point is the guarantee that someday I will be like Jesus. Then I want to show you the process of becoming like Jesus. Then I want to show you the consummation, when we finally arrive. So, I want to show the starting point, the process and the consummation when we finally become like Him.

In each case I’ll give a Bible illustration. And to discuss the starting point I’d like to go back to the beginning. God wrote a principle in nature. He wrote that principle in nature because that principle illustrates the spiritual truth. Genesis 1:11&12, “Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with seed in them, on the earth’; and it was so.” Genesis 1:20&21, “And then God said, ‘Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens. And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:24&25, “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind; cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind’; and it was so.”

In nature God made everything after its kind. The life is in the seed and the seed determines what will come. That’s true in animal life and that’s true in plant life. Dogs do not bring forth cats. A horse will not bring forth a lion. A bird will never bring forth a fish. Everything is after the life of the seed. Watermelon seeds produce watermelons. Apple seeds produce apples. A squash seed cannot produce a carrot. It’s a law of life.

Why am I stressing that life comes from the seed? 1John 3:9, “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” This is the law of physical life. It’s the law of spiritual life. His seed abides in you and His seed abides in me. That’s the guarantee that someday you will be like Christ. When you receive Christ, God put His seed into your life; a divine seed, a heavenly protoplasm. He made you alive in God. He took your spirit and he planted a seed. You are the workmanship of God. Now, because His seed is in you, that seed will produce after its kind. Everything will be conformed to the seed.

There is a great battle today among psychologists. They study human behavior and they say, “What is the greatest influence on a person? Is it the environment, where you live? Or is it heredity; genetics.” In all of life the image of the plant is stamped by the seed. In other words, all life will move to be like the parent.

My mom and dad were divorced when I was three years old. I didn’t see my father until I was seventeen years old. When I saw him, he looked just like me because his seed is in me. So, we walk like our father and we talk like our father. You look like your parents. When life begins, it begins with a seed.

I tried to study this with secular books. I’m not a scientist but I read, and I think this is true, that in the beginning when it is just a blob of protoplasm and semi liquid white substance, there is no way that the scientist knows what that will become. They are not sure if it will be a squash or a tree. At the beginning it all looks the same. Will it be a fish? Will it be a bird? Will it be a man or a woman created in the image of God? At first it all looks the same. But the seed will produce the life of the parent. The seed is parent and it will produce itself.

If it is bird protoplasm it will grow feathers and a beak. If it’s a fish protoplasm it will have scales and a tail. If it’s a reptile protoplasm it is going to produce a snake or a turtle. At the beginning you don’t know if it’s a worm, an elephant or a man.

Listen again to 1 John 3:9, “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” God has planted His seed in your life. That’s the guarantee that you are going to be like Jesus. You can’t avoid it. You might rebel along the way but His seed is in you. The seed will produce after its kind. That’s why I want to start there. That’s the guarantee that someday you will be like Jesus. That should take the burden off

your shoulders. That should take away the discouragement that says, "I don't think I'll ever arrive." You are going to arrive. His seed is in you. His life is in you. He has stamped His image in you and there will be a day when you will be like Jesus. That's the beginning; but what is the process? I want us to look at the process.

Once again there is a Bible illustration in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." James 1:23-25, "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

God's illustration is a mirror. The Bible is called "a mirror". It's a wonderful illustration of the process of becoming like Jesus. In the New Testament the mirror was highly polished brass. Usually our mirrors are glass and on the back they are silver; something to reflect light. We all know what a mirror does. It reflects what is in front of it. If I look in a mirror I see me. Here's a great and simple truth. Mirrors don't lie. There might be a trick mirror in the Fun House, concave, that will distort things.

Sometimes my Lillian acts like my mirror. She'll stand in front of me and say, "You've got a big ugly hair coming out of your nose." When I see my Lillian come with the scissors behind her back I know what is going to happen. She's going to cut my bushy eyebrows. If I stand in front of a mirror I see me. If there are pimples, I see pimples. If there are wrinkles on my face, I'll see wrinkles. If yesterday's breakfast is still on my face, I'll still see that. Mirrors tell the truth and they don't lie.

2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." The Lord said that when you look to Him, He takes the veil away. Then you don't have a veil and you come in front of a mirror and there is no veil. When I stand in front of a mirror I expect to see me but when I stand in front of the word of God, I don't see me. I see the glory of the Lord. That's not a light. That's Jesus. It's a revelation of Jesus. As I look, I

ask, “Does He have ugly hairs coming out of His nose? Does He have blemishes? Does He have bags under his eyes?” He’s perfect and He’s beautiful and He’s amazing. He’s like His salvation – how great! It’s Jesus!

If you didn’t have the unveiled face and you came to the word of God, you would see yourself. You can only see Jesus when you have an unveiled face. If you have a veiled face you’ll look in the mirror and you’ll see yourself.

Understand this concept, please, because it’s the process of being like Jesus. When you look into the word of God, it’s really you and you are in front of the mirror but it’s God’s mirror. I look in the mirror and I say, “I don’t see me.” But God says, “It’s you.” It’s not how you see you. God says, “It’s how I see you.”

When I come with a veiled face I see ugliness. That’s not how God sees me. I see my sin. That’s not how God sees me. I see my weakness. That’s not how God sees me. I see all my faults. That’s not how God sees me. That’s what Paul meant when he says, “By the renewing of your mind.” I will never think like God until God renews my mind.

I see my sin and God sees me clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. I look in the mirror and I see Ed Miller on earth. God says, “That’s not what I see. I see Ed Miller sitting in the heavenly places.” I see myself as inadequate and helpless. I see Jesus victorious. In my own eyes I’m a barren branch. God sees me as a branch attached to the vine and having that life. I see me; God sees me in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes I get discouraged with some Christian because I don’t see Christ in that Christian. One time the Holy Spirit rebuked me. He said, “You are trying to see Christ in that Christian. Try seeing that Christian in Christ.” It made such a difference. I was so critical. I said, “He’s not growing. I want to shake him. I want to do what the child did to the flower and say, ‘Grow!’” But God’s seed is in Him. Even though I don’t see it with my natural eyes, he’s being conformed to Christ. God engineers everything to conform us to our parents; from one degree of glory to another we are being changed as we see Christ in the mirror. Every new revelation of Christ makes me more like Christ.

I want to show the relationship between the gaze and the glory. He said, “As I gaze, I’m changed.” The more I gaze, the more I’m changed. James 1:24, “...for once he has looked at himself and gone

away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.” Do you hear what James is saying? If I walk away from the mirror, I’ll forget who I am. I’ll forget who I am in Christ. That’s why we’ve got to keep looking in the mirror; not to learn about the mirror but to see the Lord. Then, as we see the Lord, we are changed!

Two things happen if you stop seeing Jesus. Number one, you are going to forget who you are. Number two, the process will stop. As you gaze, you are changed. If you stop gazing, the sanctification process is over. That’s the process. The starting point is His seed in you. The process is that you look in the Bible to see Jesus and we’re changed.

When we see the Lord and we’re changed, some people get confused what that means. They think, “If I see Him as a great forgiver, I’ll become a great forgiver.” But the Bible says, “He who has been forgiven much, loves much.” So, when I see Jesus, I’m changed. That’s true. But if I see Jesus as a Teacher, I don’t become a teacher. I become a student. If I see Him as my Lord, I don’t become as a lord. I become a servant. What if I saw Jesus as omnipresent? Do I become omnipresent? That’s not what it means.

Let me illustrate from Psalm 23, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Let’s say that God shows me Christ as my Shepherd. Do I become a shepherd? No. I lay down in green pastures. I’m led in paths of righteousness. If I go through the valley of the shadow of death, I won’t be afraid. When my neighbor looks at me they don’t say, “Ed has become a shepherd.” But they see me resting and they see my walking in righteousness. And in their deep heart they think, “He must have a wonderful shepherd.” We’re conformed to Christ and that conforming is by gazing. Brothers and sisters in Christ, don’t stop gazing at Jesus in the Bible.

The starting point is that God has put His seed, His life in you. That seed will produce after its own kind. The process is that we come with an unveiled face and we look in the Bible and we see how God sees us. How wonderful is the way God sees us! But will I ever become like what God sees?

1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” When we see Him, we’ll be like Him. That’s not only true down the road; that’s

true now! I gave illustrations. The starting point is the seed. The process is a mirror. Let me give you the consummation.

2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” I’d like to illustrate it with the judgment seat of Christ. To many Christians this is a frightening prospect. They don’t like to think about the judgment seat of Christ. They often miss God’s heart about the judgment seat of Christ. I know some Christians who dread the judgment seat of Christ.

Many books are written about it. I want to pass by the technical side. I studied the Bema (Judgment) Seat and perhaps you have, too. I know it’s not about God judging sin. God is honest and He will not collect the same debt twice. Jesus paid for all your sins on the cross. You’ll never have to pay again for that. What is the Judgment Seat of Christ?

1 Corinthians 3:13-15, “...each man’s work will become evident, for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.” A day is coming when everything will be tested by fire. The deepest thoughts of my heart will be examined by fire. Everything I have ever done will be tested by fire; what was fruit and what was works.

Here’s the point. 100% everything that I have ever done to dishonor the Lord, to disappoint God, to hurt Jesus, every sinful thought, everything I’ve left undone, every offense to God, will someday be burned up. It will be gone. People are afraid of the Judgment Seat of Christ. I can’t wait. I want that fire. I want everything that doesn’t please Jesus to be burned up. That’s the consummation at the end! That’s why all tears will be wiped away. You don’t have to be afraid of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, God will look at you and say, “There is nothing that displeases me.” I have arrived because I see Jesus and I’m finally like Him. There’s no more sin and there’s no more dishonoring God. It’s all ashes; it’s gone. I’m not afraid of that fire – “Burn baby, burn!” I want that fire.

Let me review this. How do I know for sure that I will become like Jesus? It’s because God has put His seed in our hearts and

everything produces after its kind. What is the process? I stand in front of the word of God and I see Jesus and every view of Christ transforms my heart. How will it end? Someday, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, everything that displeases God will be burned up.

Our Heavenly Father, how glad we are for the truth that we are going to be like Jesus. Sometimes we look at our lives and we doubt that it will ever happen. But You've given us Your life and You have put Your seed in us, the precious Holy Spirit, and have given us Your word so that we can know the Lord. Help us to see the union of grace and gazing. Help us to keep our eyes on Christ. Thank You for the day when everything dishonoring will be burned up and for forever we'll be like Jesus. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

#9

UNION WITH CHRIST

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY UNION WITH CHRIST MESSAGE

I desire to present our union with Jesus, by stressing three important principles. There can be no union apart from the Lordship of Christ; there can be no union apart from the continual flow of His life; and there can be no union with Christ apart from spiritual romance. His Lordship I will illustrate by His union with His mother, Mary; the flow of His life I will illustrate by the relationship of the head with the body. Finally, I will use the intimacies of the marriage bond to illustrate union with Christ.

The Indispensable Principle

As we come to study God's word, there's an indispensable principle, and that is total reliance on the Holy Spirit. Don't ever take that principle for granted. We need to trust the Lord when we study the Bible. Only God can reveal God. I used to take that for granted. So, I went through my Bible and now on every page in my Bible I've written an arrow pointing up to God. When I open my Bible I remember the indispensable principle.

Song of Solomon 5:2, "I was asleep, but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved was knocking. 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one! For my head is drenched with dew. My locks with the damp of the night.'" The bride was sleeping but her heart was awake. She said, "I hear a voice knocking at the door"; a voice knocking. A voice is the word of God. Knocking is someone wanting to come in. Every time God speaks, he wants to come in. His voice is an invitation and He wants to come and have us respond to His word.

Heavenly Father, we ask You to speak to us and enable us to open the door so that you can come in. We know how much we need You. Show us the Lord Jesus in a fresh way and living way. Deliver us from cold academics and show us the Living Word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

We are looking at these great foundations of our faith. The foundation I'd like to look at now is called "Union with Jesus", "Union with Christ". That truth is all over the Bible and especially in the New Testament. It's so comprehensive. We're to abide in Christ as a branch abides in the vine. We're to relate to Christ as a bride relates to a husband, and like children relate to their parents. What the head is to the body, that's union. What the sun is to the earth, that's union. What the soil is to the plant is a picture of union. When you read the epistles of the New Testament, the expression "in Christ" is used over and over and over.

The Bible says that we are found in Christ, preserved in Christ, sanctified in Christ Jesus and we are rooted in Christ Jesus and we're made perfect in the Lord. We're called to think in the Lord, walk in the Lord, speak in the Lord, labor in the Lord, suffer in the Lord, and rejoice in the Lord. Everything is in Christ Jesus. We conquer in the

Lord. We get married only in the Lord. Children obey their parents in the Lord. We receive one another in Christ Jesus. We reign in life in Christ Jesus. We submit to one another in the Lord. We die in the Lord. We are asleep in Jesus. When He returns we return with Him. All of that pictures union in Christ.

I have a problem. I want union with Christ. Where do I begin? There is so much in the Bible that pictures union with Christ, like eating and drinking. I think the greatest picture of union with Christ is John 17:21, "...that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." The Trinity; God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit pictures our union with Jesus. Let me tell you my heart as I present union with Christ.

I want to tell you the two aspects of union which have most changed my life. We'll leave many things out but this has changed my life. I want to show you how union with Jesus relates to His Lordship. I always use a Bible illustration. To illustrate that I want to use Mary, the mother of Jesus. Then the second illustration is the head related to the body and that is the flow of His life. Then right at the end, very quickly, I want to give the illustration of marriage.

We begin with the Virgin Mary. I believe she is the first picture of the church in the New Testament. You can tell that by her contribution to the world. What was her contribution? She gave Christ to the world. That's the contribution for the church; we are to give Christ to the world. Colossians 1:28-29, "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete to Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." We want to give Christ to the world.

How did she do that? Luke 1:35, "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.'" The Holy Spirit formed Christ in Mary. How did she respond? Luke 1:38, "And Mary said, 'Behold, the bond slave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." She said, "May it be done unto me." She didn't say, "What should I do?" It was done unto her and she didn't do anything. In the fullness of time she gave Christ to the world.

Galatians 4:4, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman born under the Law...”

Mary pictures us. The Holy Spirit forms Christ in us. Christ grows in us. In the fullness of time we give Christ to the world. I want to use Mary as a picture; not Mary when she was conceiving Christ or giving Christ. We’re talking about union with Christ. I want to share how Mary related to her son. I want to show how she related to Him when He was a boy twelve years old and then when He began His ministry and turned water into wine.

Mark 3:33-35, “And answering them, He said, ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.’” Jesus said, “Whoever does the will of God, that’s my mother, that’s my sister and that’s my brother.” John 12:26, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” Both of these verses have to do with the will of God.

When Jesus was twelve years old he related to His parents by obedience. Luke 2:41&42, “And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast;” At age twelve Jesus submitted to his mother and stepfather. They decided where He would go. If they went to Jerusalem to a feast, Jesus went with them. If they went to visit relatives, like Elizabeth, Jesus went with them. They had a relationship with their son, like any parent has a relationship with their son. Based on that relationship, they had certain expectations.

On this occasion Jesus disappointed his parents. They had expectations and He did not meet those expectations. The way he acted not only confused them but it upset them. Luke 2:48, “And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.’” Mary said, “Why have you treated us this way?”

You know the story. Luke 2:43, “...and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it.” Based on their relationship Mary expected Jesus to go home when they went home.

When they didn't see Jesus, according to Luke 2:44, they thought He was with the relatives.

I can understand Mary's point. I had six children and based on my relationship with them, I had expectations. If I had a twelve year old son and he didn't come home with us, I would not be happy. My firstborn son is David. We had a curfew to be home at a certain time. One day David missed the curfew. He was late and he thought, "I'm late anyway and I'm going to get in trouble, so I might as well stay here all night." So, he stayed all night. He did not call us and we did not know where he was. He figured that he was in trouble anyway and he might as well stay. Something like that happened in this case.

We have a relationship with Jesus and sometimes based on our relationship, we have expectations of Jesus. I'm a child of God and I expect Him to keep me from tragedy. I'm a child of God and I expect Him to keep me from sickness. And if I get sick, because of my relationship, I expect Him to heal me. I expect Him to keep me from poverty. It's all based on a relationship. I have expectations but sometimes He doesn't meet my expectations.

A tremendous statement was made when Jesus was twelve years old. When His mother heard it, she didn't understand it. So, she put it in her heart. The Bible says that she thought about it, she pondered it in her heart. How long did she ponder it in her heart? The answer is she pondered it until He was thirty years old. She didn't understand what He said.

Luke 2:49, Jesus said, "And He said to them, 'Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?'" Let me put that in my own words. He said, "Mother, it's true I have a relationship with you and Joseph, but what you may not know is that I have a relationship with My Holy Father God. My relationship with my Holy Father God is higher than my relationship with you. My relationship with You will be in terms with my relationship to My Holy Father God." I hope God teaches us that truth. Jesus will always do His Father's will. I must not quarrel with Him if He doesn't meet my expectations. My will is now in terms of the Father's will."

There is a strange expression here in the words Jesus said. The translation in my Bible says, "I must be about My Father's house." Another translation says, "I must be about My Father's interests." Another translation says, "I must be about My Father's concerns." Another translation says, "I must be about My Father's affairs."

Another translation is, “I must be occupied with the things of My Father.” Why are there so many translations about that word? Here’s why. In the original language in the Greek, Jesus said, “I must be about My Father’s...” and there is no noun. The translator puts the noun in. He’s trying to help you understand. Jesus said, “I must be about My Father’s everything. I must be about My Father’s will, about My Father’s pleasure, about His house, about His affairs, about His interests, and about His delight.

There comes a time in life when a Christian has to learn that God relates to us in terms of His relationship to God. The Lord Jesus will always relate to His Father first and then to me. It’s about My Father’s will and not my wishes. Luke 2:51, “And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.”

After Jesus said that to Mary, He began again to submit to His parents. He did what they asked Him to do. He went where they went and He acted according to their expectations. He limited Himself to whatever His parents told Him. Brothers and sisters in Christ, I told you that I chose this because it changed my life. I want to show you how it was and how it is now.

Jesus submitted to Mary. Believe it or not, Jesus submitted to me. I decided that Jesus should go to this program, so He came. I decided that I would visit the nursing home, “Jesus, come along.” I decided to go to the prison, so I took Jesus with me to the prison and He came. I decided to take Jesus to the hospital with me, so He came. I used to do open air preaching; I preached on the street corner. I said, “Jesus, today we’re going to preach on the street corner and He obeyed.”

That was my expectation; where I am, there is Jesus. Praise God, He showed up! He did come! He did bless! He did miracles! It was wonderful! Jesus was listening to me. Wherever I took Him, He went. I didn’t understand. John 2:2&3, “...and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding. And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’” Jesus is now thirty years old. From age twelve to thirty Jesus obeyed His parents. She had the expectation of that but it’s going to change right now.

John 2:4, “And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.’” When Mary said, “They have no wine,” I don’t think she was expecting a miracle but I think she was

expecting her son to go to the store and get some wine. They ran out of wine. “Jesus, you do what I tell you to do.” All of a sudden He said, “Woman, it’s over. What do I have to do with you?” For the first time her eyes were opened and her heart understood. She had pondered it all those years and finally it dawned on her. The best thing Mary ever said is in John 2:5, “His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says to you, do it.’”

She understood that union is Lordship. He doesn’t do what I say. I do what He says. We quoted already, and I’d like to read it again, John 12:26, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” I had it backwards. I thought, “Where I am, there Jesus would be.” But that verse says, “Wherever Jesus is, there will be my servant.” When God began to show me that, it changed my life. This was a crossroad in my life. It was critical.

At this point you learn that it’s not me telling Jesus what to do but it’s learning to listen to Him, so that you can go where He is. This is where many ministries come to an end. When Christians learn this, sometimes they quit their church. Pastors leave their pastorates. Missionaries come off the field. People who are writing books no longer write the books. Artists who were having concerts no longer have the concerts. For a long time Jesus cooperated with them but there comes a time when He turns it around and He says, “Now you start obeying Me.”

I had a hard time when I left the pastorate. People didn’t understand. They thought I was backsliding. In my heart I knew I was no longer going to drag Jesus from place to place. I was going to wait until He talked to me. At age thirty Jesus started His ministry. I had a great ministry but Jesus had none. He hadn’t even started His ministry. He started His ministry when I learned that principle. When I look back at my ministry, I ask, “Where are the Christians? Who is following the Lord?” There weren’t very many.

When I set my heart to seeking the Lord, He started His ministry. That’s what brings me to France. It’s Jesus. It’s His ministry! It’s not mine. I don’t tell Him what to do anymore. I don’t try to drag Him from place to place. I wait on the Lord so He can tell me where He is. That’s the first principle of union. Union is Lordship. I am related to Him and I have no expectations. Whatever He wants is fine.

Let me give a second principle. Union with Christ is not only Lordship, it's the flow of His life. There are two great pictures. One is the vine and the branches and the other is the title that Christ is the head of the body. In the New Testament the word "head" is used several different ways. One is that Adam was the head of the race and Christ is the last Adam, the head of the race.

Sometimes the word "head" is like the head of a company. Ephesians 1:22, "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church." 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." It's the head like an authority. Colossians 2:10, "...and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority."

I don't want to talk about the federal headship of Christ. I don't want to talk about headship being about authority. Colossians 2:18&19, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments grows with a growth which is from God." Christ is the head of the body and the body is to lay hold of the head. And the members are to live in union with the head. But in Colossians the word "head" is the word "brain". He's the head of the body and it's saying that he is the brain of the body. His life flows like life from the brain.

My grandmother used to call me "Butchie" and she was always arguing with me. She kept saying, "Butchie, use your head." What she meant was to use my brain to think! My grandmother didn't give me a lot of spiritual advice but through the years I remember those words, "Use your head," because my head is Christ. I want to use my head. Jesus is my head.

The only thing I know about the brain is what I read. I'm not a doctor but what I read was very impressive. The brain and its nervous system connected to the body is the best computer on earth. You can't breathe without your brain. You can't digest your food without your brain. Voluntary and involuntary movements are from your brain. All of your five senses are controlled by your brain. All your emotions are controlled by your brain. If your brain is broken, you are paralyzed.

You wouldn't know anything; who you are or how to relate to the world that you live in.

I'm not trying to impress you with facts about the brain. It's a picture of Christ. Your brain weighs about three pounds. Your brain has nine million two hundred thousand nerves. It has more than nine billion neurons. It's an amazing thing that God has given us! And it pictures Jesus in relationship and union with His body.

Colossians 2:19, "...and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God." The brain is a giver. The body is a receiver. That is the simplicity of union with Christ; His life flows.

Let me break that down into a couple of spiritual truths. As my head and brain, Christ does two things. He not only commands me but then He enables me to obey the command. He not only gives the command but He gives the power to do it. The brain tells my hand to move and then gives me the power to move. My brain tells my foot to walk and then He gives me power to walk. My ear doesn't know it's an ear but when God talks to my ear, my ear listens.

Christ is my head and He gives a command. So, Christ says, "Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the church." Then He enables you to do that. "Hold fast the head!" The head says, "Rejoice evermore!" Then He enables you to do that. "In everything give thanks." Then He enables you to do that. My head gives the command and then the power.

Why could Jesus say to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch out your hand?" It's because He enabled him to stretch out his hand. Why could Jesus say to the crippled man, "Take up your bed and walk?" It's because He enabled him to take up his bed and walk. That's the ministry of the head and brain. Why could Jesus take a humped over woman of eighteen years and say, "Stand up straight!" It's because He enabled her to stand up straight! Why could Jesus command, "Lazarus, come forth?" It's because He enabled him to live again.

Christ is our head. My hand does not know that it's a hand. My foot doesn't know it's a foot. My ear doesn't know it's an ear but if my hand lives for the pleasure of my brain, and my foot lives for the pleasure of the brain, there will be no problem in my body. Christ is not only the One who gives and provides but as the Head He is the

unifier. When the members receive the life from the Head, they have one life. There is no life center in my hand and no life center in my leg or in my foot.

My paternal grandmother had sugar diabetes and a very severe case. They had to amputate her right arm. She still lived because there is no life center in her right arm. Then it got worse and they had to amputate her left arm. She was still alive because there is no life center in her left arm. Then they had to cut off both her legs. She was just a stump but she was still alive.

The body has one life and that life is Christ. As the body gives life to the members, the members are united to the brain and they are also united to each other. If you are rightly related to Jesus and I'm rightly related to Jesus, we are one. When I get up in the morning I don't have a committee meeting with the members of my body. I don't say to my hand, "Alright hand, take the covers and pull them off. And right foot, you get out of bed first and then left foot, you make sure you follow." Imagine if my right hand had a will of its own and my left hand had a will of its own and my foot had a will of its own and my right foot wanted to go one way and the other foot wanted to go the other way? There would be chaos.

My nose might say, "I want to go out and smell flowers." My back says, "I want to go to bed." My mouth says, "I'm hungry." My hand says, "I want to throw a ball." What confusion! That's the confusion in the church today. It's because they don't have One Life. Every Christian has his own life. One wants to go one way and one wants to go the other way. That's why He says, "Hold fast the head because then there is one life in the body." If one hand is related to my head, and the other hand is related to my head, it's perfect unity. If you are related to Jesus and I'm related to Jesus, we are one.

We don't need to have unity in the church by having many programs. The way to be one is to hold fast to the Head. I want to show you the difference between light and life. The strength of unity is in life. Different Christians have different light. Some see it one way and some see it another way. When you base unity on light, there is division. The Calvinists see it one way and he goes that way. The Armenians see it another way and he goes that way. The dispensationalists see it one way and he goes that way. Those in the Covenant Theology see it another way and they go that way. One person says, "We need all the spiritual gifts." Another says, "The gifts

don't exist anymore." Another says, "We need a baptism of the Holy Spirit." Another says, "We need to baptize babies." Others say, "No, it's only for adults." So, everybody has their division on light. Churches split and seminaries split but every split is based on light.

I'm embarrassed to say that when I was a pastor, my church split. You'd be amazed at what they split over. They were arguing over whether we should put gravel in the driveway or seashells in the driveway! If we had gravel, we had to pay for it. If we had seashells, it was given to us as a gift but it would smell like fish for one week. So, there was a big argument. People started to get angry and began to cry. Some left the church and never came back because we were based on light.

It doesn't matter what your light is. We can disagree. If we have Christ, we're one. We wouldn't split. If you are looking to Christ and I'm looking to Christ, we're one. A team of mules couldn't pull us apart. Christ is Lord and I'm going to obey Him. Christ is Life and I want His Life to flow.

Union is not only Lordship and Life but it's intimate relationship. The illustration is marriage. 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous for you with a Godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin." Romans 7:4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God." We are married to Him who rose from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.

I didn't want to leave you with something technical; that union is obedience and that union is receiving. Union is relationship with Jesus. He not only loves you but He's in love with you. It's a romance. He just can't get enough of you. Genesis 4:1, "Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a man-child with the help of the Lord.'" Hosea 6:3, "So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth."

The way the Bible uses the word "know", Adam "knew" his wife and she conceived; it's a relationship. I have six children. Everyone was born out of a private, secret, wonderful union with my Lillian. What is union with Christ? Union with Christ is submitting to His

Lordship. Union with Christ is receiving His Life. Union with Christ is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful truth of union with Christ. Set us free, we pray, from expecting You to follow us. Teach us what it means to follow You. As members of your body, teach us to hold fast to the head. We ask that we might enjoy the intimacies of the marriage bond in our union with You. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

10

THE GREAT COMMISSION

WHAT I LONG TO COMMUNICATE IN MY MESSAGE ON THE GREAT COMMISSION

This is not a message on the responsibility of missions. I desire to present “how” God expects a Christian to fulfill the Great Commission. This question is answered in John chapter 21, in the background of Peter’s restoration. The two parts of the great commission are preaching the gospel and making disciples of those who respond positively. The illustrations of victorious fishing in the first part of John 21 contain the principles of preaching the gospel; the illustration of victorious shepherding in the second part of John 21 contain the principles of making disciples. The all-inclusive message can be summarized in two words; live and love! That is the “how”! Be yourself and love Jesus!

Indispensable Principle

As we prepare to look in the word of God, there is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable and that is total reliance on God's Holy Spirit. Only God can reveal God and He's promised that if we would come as little children He would reveal Himself to us. He has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and has revealed them unto babes. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ Jesus. If God hides something, you'll never find it. But if He tells you the hiding place, then you can find it. These things are hidden in Christ Jesus. We know the hiding place. There's no excuse for not knowing the Lord.

I want to share the great foundation which we call the "Great Commission". Our Lord Jesus has a worldwide heart. He longs that people know Him. John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." As you go on in the Lord you are going to learn that there is only one soul winner. His name is Jesus. There is only one evangelist. His name is the Lord Jesus. There is only one missionary. His name is Jesus. You might be a missionary channel but you are not the missionary. You might be a soul winning channel but you are not a soul winner.

Our Father, we thank You for every part of Your word. We thank You especially for John 21 and we pray that you will work that in our hearts. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

I wanted to deal with this at the end because I think it's a very vital truth on the heart of Jesus. I think that almost all Christians are familiar with the expression "The Great Commission". I misunderstood it for many years. I knew it had two parts; go preach the gospel to the world and then train them to be disciples.

The Spirit of God has been very patient with Ed Miller. I thought He sent me into the world to witness for Christ. He taught me that He put me in Christ to witness to the world. That's not the same thing. I'm not in the world to testify for Christ. I'm in Christ so that He can manifest Himself.

This is very important in understanding the Great Commission. I think for most believers they believe that the Great Commission is

recorded four times. It's in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and in Acts 1. Most commentators will tell you that the gospel of John does not contain the Great Commission. I think the exact opposite is true. John not only gives the Great Commission but he gives it in its most completed form.

Why do I need to study the Great Commission in John? It's because it answers the question, "How can I fulfill the Great Commission?" Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts tell me the Great Commission but they don't tell me how to do it. It can be terribly frustrating if you don't know how. "Abide in Jesus." How? "Worship the Lord." How? "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." How? My heart wants to know how to do it.

I suffered under this because I was taught that I was responsible for every sinner that I ever met. I made a vow to the Lord that I would not go to bed until I led somebody to Jesus. I stayed up late very many nights looking for some drunkard who would listen to me. I had a big box called my "Hallelujah Box" and in it I put the names of those who confessed to come to Christ. If I didn't lead someone to Christ I felt so guilty. I was taught that their blood was on my hands. I was the biggest legalist that you could ever meet.

If someone was painting a house, I would climb up the ladder to tell them about Jesus. I used to get on a bus and ride all day long just to hand out tracts and talk to people. I wanted to fulfill the Great Commission. When I first came to the Lord I didn't even know there were two testaments in my Bible. I read, "Preach the gospel to every creature." I went home and I preached to my dog. He's a creature. I told my little beagle how Jesus loved Him. I was very confused about the Great Commission. God has begun to open my eyes.

John 21 is the "how" of the Great Commission. It's told in terms of Peter's restoration; coming back to the Lord. If you have that chapter before you I want you to glance at verses 1-14. Don't read it. Just glance at it. Just scan it and run your eyes through the text. You will notice that it's about fishing. The Bible tells us that seven disciples gathered at the Sea of Tiberius. The Lord filled their nets with one hundred fifty three fish.

Alright, set that aside. Now look at the second half of the chapter, 15-23. Verses 15, 16 and 17 say, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs, feed my sheep." The second half of the chapter is about shepherding. In John 21 you have a story; fishing and shepherding.

That's the Great Commission. Fishing is winning souls to Jesus. Shepherding is training people in the Lord. That's not my idea. In Matthew when Jesus called Peter, He said, "I'll make you fishers of men."

Let me tell the story in my own words. Seven disciples gathered together in Galilee. We have the names of five of them; Peter, Nathanael, Thomas, James and John. There are two that are not named. I know who they are. That's you and me. So, they gathered at Galilee.

When they arrived they were waiting for Jesus to show up. Matthew 26:32, "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." Matthew 28:7, "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." Matthew 28:10, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.'" Mark 16:7, "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He said to you.'"

They had a clear word from heaven. "After I arise again, I'll meet you in Galilee." The angels told them to go to Galilee. Jesus told them to go to Galilee. So, these seven disciples go to Galilee. Why did they go to Galilee? They went to see the risen Savior. He invited them to go see Him alive. That was in their hearts; to go meet the risen Savior. But at this time He didn't give them an address. He didn't say, "Go to 35 Jerusalem Avenue." He just said, "Go to Galilee."

The prophet Amos in chapter 3 says, "Can two men walk together if they haven't agreed?" So, they are going to Galilee. Galilee is a big place. He didn't say where to go. He just said, "Go to Galilee." Galilee is a region. There's an upper Galilee and a lower Galilee. He didn't tell them what city. He didn't say, "Meet me by the sea." He didn't say, "I'll meet you at the base of the mountain." Where were they going to go?

I can picture these disciples discussing it. "Maybe we should go to Cana in Galilee. That's where he did His first miracle." Someone else might have said, "No, no. Maybe it's Nazareth. That's in Galilee. That was his boyhood town." Someone else might have said, "Let's go to Capernaum. That's where He did so many miracles. That's in Galilee." Another might have said, "I think we should go to Mount Carmel." Do you see how vague that command was? He puts it in your heart, "Go see the risen Savior," but you don't know where to go.

They finally came to a decision, “Let’s go to the Sea of Galilee. That’s where He walked on water and that’s where He multiplied the fish. It was on the shores of Galilee that He fed the multitude. That’s where Peter caught the fish with the coin lodged in the gill. That’s where Peter lent Jesus his boat and Jesus preached from the boat.” So, they went to Galilee.

John 21:3, “Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will also come with you.’ They went out, and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.” When they go to Galilee they aren’t sure that is the right place. How long would you wait if Jesus didn’t show up? Would you wait a week? Would you wait a month? Would you think you were in the wrong place? They waited and waited and waited and finally Peter said, “I’m going fishing.”

Many commentators think that when Peter said, “I’m going fishing,” that he was quitting his life as a Christian. When he first met Jesus he left his boats and his nets. Some think, “Now he’s going back to the old vocation.” But we know why he was there. He came to see the risen Christ. If Matthew was the spokesman and said, “I’m going back to tax gathering,” I would think that maybe he was giving up on being a Christian. If the Apostle Paul was there and said, “I’m going back to persecuting Christians,” I would understand that he was giving up.

I think when Peter said, “I’m going fishing,” it was different. I think Peter was saying, “That’s all I know. I’m a fisherman. That’s what I do. That’s my life. That’s my trade. From a little child I was brought up as a fisherman.” Peter might have said, “I don’t know if this is the right place. I don’t know if this is the right day. I don’t know if this is the right time. I have no idea when He is going to show up. So, I’m going fishing.”

I think what he had in his mind is that he was going to be who he was. He wasn’t giving up on the Lord and he wasn’t going back on the Lord. He knew he was forgiven but I think in his heart he felt disqualified to ever be used by the Lord again. He had denied the Lord. Jesus told him that someday he would be a fisher of men. I think he gave up on that. But in his heart he had come to see the risen Savior. He loved the Lord Jesus. So, he says, “Until He shows up, I will just do what I do.”

Brothers and sisters, what are we supposed to do until Jesus shows up? Let me give you the first answer to the Great Commission;

go fishing. In other words, just live. Be yourselves. Fishing represents Peter. Until the Lord shows Himself to you, be who you are. God has ever only wanted two things. He wants you to be you and He wants Himself to be God. Stay out of the Godhead! Don't try to be God! Don't try to do what only God can do! Be yourself, with your gifts, your vocation, your calling, and your interests.

When you go fishing it might be sales or it might be teaching or it might be farming or it might be inventing or it might be a machinist or a doctor or a lawyer or a housewife. Just be who you are and wait for Jesus to show up. It doesn't matter if you are selling pencils or shining shoes or going to school or if you are retired. Until Jesus shows up, just live. If you are going to understand the Great Commission, it begins there. Just live and wait for Jesus.

When he went fishing God began to lay down principles of the Great Commission. Let me show you at least three things that Peter learned. The first thing he learned in the Great Commission is what I've already mentioned; that is that I'm not a fisherman. I'm not a soul winner. I'm not a missionary. I'm not an evangelist. For Peter, this was a refresher course. Three years before, he had a similar experience. On the level of earth, he fished all night. He fished in the shallows. He was an expert with the nets. He wasn't lazy. He fished all night. Some fishermen have a bad day. He had more than a bad day. When you have a bad day you catch a few fish. He worked all night and he caught nothing.

The first thing God teaches us in the Great Commission is that we don't know how to fish. John 21:5, "Jesus therefore said to them, 'Children, you do not have any fish, do you?'" They answered Him, 'No.'" "Have you caught any fish," and they had to say, "No." If you want to fulfill the Great Commission you've got to see that you can't do it. You can't do it, God can do it but He won't. He says, "I won't do it by myself and you can't do it but I will do it in union with you."

Peter learned, "I can't do it. I'm not sufficient." Here is the second lesson, John 21:6, "And he said to them, 'Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch.' They cast therefore, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish." I can't do it but He can. He is adequate. The second lesson is that Jesus will tell me where to fish. Jesus will tell me how to fish. Jesus will bring fish into the net. The whole thing is a miracle.

The Lord does not make us adequate. He shows us that He is adequate. They had a great catch of fish!

I once went fishing with my son, Daniel. We did not do very well. He caught a very small fish. The first thing he said was, "Take my picture." He held a little fish and I had to take his picture with the fish. When Jesus filled the net with fish, they didn't say, "Take my picture." John 21:7 says, "It is the Lord." When I let Jesus fish, He gets all the glory.

Look what Peter does in John 21:7, "That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea." He was on the boat fishing and he had his shirt off. Perhaps it was a warm day. When John said, "It's the Lord," Peter put his shirt on and jumped in the water. Wouldn't you think you would take your shirt off to jump into the water?

This part is not in the Bible. My mind is crazy; it's just what I think. I think he tried to walk on water. He failed the first time and he said, "I won't take my eyes off Jesus this time." So, he got dressed and stepped off the boat and he had to swim to shore. I can imagine Jesus laughing on the shore.

I have to learn that I can't do it. I have to learn that He can do it. Then I have to learn that He does not need me but He wants to use me. Look at John 21:9, "And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread." When he got to shore, Jesus was already cooking fish. He didn't need Peter's fish. He had fish already. Where did He get it? Did He create it? I won't go into all of that. What I want you to see is that Jesus doesn't need Ed Miller and He doesn't need you. He didn't need Peter or his fish.

Watch what the Lord does in John 21:10, "Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.' How precious is this; 'Bring some of your fish and put it with My fish!' He doesn't need us but He wants to use us. What can I bring Jesus? The only thing I can bring Him is what He puts in the net. He gives it to me so that I can give it back to Him.

In this miracle after the resurrection, notice that the net did not break. When Jesus does the fishing, none of the fish are lost. I remember when I was beginning to know the Lord and I was fishing

the wrong way, I spent most of my time repairing the nets. The nets kept breaking. This program didn't work. I had to try a different program. They weren't coming to hear me. I had to set up some kind of a gimmick. Before the resurrection the nets broke but after the resurrection they did not break.

These are the three wonderful truths about the Great Commission; I can't do it; He can do it; He doesn't need me but He wants to use me. The principle of fishing is, "Just live." That's the Great Commission. You be you and let Jesus do the fishing. I have an idea that if we went around the room we would have many testimonies. You would say, "I didn't plan it but God brought that person into my life and I got to share Jesus." That's Jesus putting the fish into the net. I don't have to work at it. I just have to live. I just have to be who I am and let God be who He is. That's the first part; fishing.

Let me say a couple of words about the second part; shepherding. I want to give a principle that I call the key to shepherding. If I'm going to be used by the Lord in the Great Commission, I need to be free in my heart. God tells this story in terms of Peter because Peter was feeling guilty. If I'm going to be used by the Lord, I can't be living under condemnation. That's why the Lord tells us this story in terms of Peter's restoration.

I'm certain that in Peter's heart he felt disqualified and said, "I will never be a fisher of men. I'll still love the Lord and I know I'm going to heaven but as far as service, I've disqualified myself." I want you to notice how the Lord Jesus deals with Peter as he swims to shore. At first, I thought it looked a little cruel, what Jesus did. He begins to bring up things that Peter didn't want to think about. I already told you that the whole miracle with the fish was a refresher course. The first time is in Luke 5:8, "But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" The first time God did that miracle, Peter said, "Depart; I'm a sinful man."

Listen to John 21:9, "And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread." When Peter got to shore, the first thing he saw was a charcoal fire. I can't prove it but I think his heart sunk when he saw a charcoal fire. John 18:18, "Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming

themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.”

There’s only two times in your New Testament that you read about a charcoal fire. The last time Peter saw a charcoal fire he was denying the Lord. Now he swims to shore and that memory comes back of the charcoal fire. Jesus did that on purpose. I say, “Lord, why are you doing that to that poor man?”

John 21:15, “So, when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My lambs.’” Don’t read that “la, la, la”. Peter was already suffering when he saw the charcoal fire and now Jesus speaks to him for the first time and he calls him, “Simon”. That was his name before he got saved. Jesus isn’t calling him “Peter”. He’s calling him “Simon”. I think that was painful.

Remember the verse that we began with, John 1:42, “He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas. (Which translated means Peter).’” Jesus is stirring up Peter’s heart; the memory of the miracle of the fish and the memory of the charcoal fire. Peter thought, “I don’t want to see that. Jesus lost confidence in me and now He is calling me by my old name.” That was very uncomfortable for Peter.

Then Jesus asked him the same question three times. He had denied the Lord three times. John 21:15, “So, when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My lambs.’” John 21:16, “He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Shepherd My sheep.’” John 21:17, “He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’”

These are painful memories for Peter. Then Jesus says the most wonderful thing that Peter could hear. John 21:12, “Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples ventured to question Him, ‘Who are You?’ knowing that it was the Lord.” He invites Peter to come and dine at the charcoal fire. It’s as if the Lord was saying, “Peter, I know all about your past and I know all about your failures

and I know all about your denials and I choose you anyway. Before the foundations of the world I chose you. I knew what you would do.” I think when He said, “Come and dine,” He wants fellowship with Peter. I think what He was saying is, “I’m comfortable with your past. You should be comfortable with your past.”

Now I want to come to the main point. Many who have studied this have called attention to three different Greek words for the word “love”. There are also different words for the word “feed”. There are also different Greek words for the word “sheep”. People get lost in the Greek. That’s not the point. What Jesus asked Peter is, “Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?” And you know the record. Peter hesitated and he got caught in his throat. He couldn’t say it. “Do you love Me enough to die for Me?” Peter couldn’t say, “Yes.” So, Jesus said it for him.

John 21:18&19, “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” When Jesus predicted that Peter would have a violent death, was that good news or bad news? For Peter, that was the greatest news that Jesus could ever give because He asked Peter, “Do you love Me enough to die for Me?” Peter couldn’t answer. And when you can’t answer, Jesus answers for you. Jesus promised Peter that He would never deny Him again. That was the heart of our Lord Jesus.

How can I keep the Great Commission? Is this too simple; live and love Jesus? That’s the Great Commission. He gave us that chapter to show us the Great Commission. He didn’t say, “Do you have financial support.” He didn’t say, “Did you go to Bible School or to seminary?” He didn’t say, “Do you have a love for souls?” He didn’t ask, “Do you have the correct spiritual gifts?” He didn’t say, “Do you have a call to the ministry?” He didn’t say, “Do you have a board behind you to support you?” He didn’t say, “Do you have the commitment to be a missionary?” He just said, “Do you love Me?”

If you are ever going to fulfill the Great Commission, just live and love Jesus. As you live, God will bring the fish to you. As you love Jesus, you will support and help the people of God. Live and love Jesus...

Our heavenly Father, thank You for John 21. Oh, how we learn about how to fulfill the Great Commission! We know that we’re not

adequate. We know that You are adequate. We know that You don't need us but You want to use us. Teach us just to live as we wait to meet the risen Savior. Then, Lord, shed Your love abroad in our heart that we might evermore fall in love with Jesus. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

EPILOGUE

(Foundational principles found in the story of Ruth)

As far as the chronological order of books in the Bible, the Book of Ruth comes after the book of Judges, but historically Ruth does not follow Judges. Ruth 1:1, “Now it came about in the days when the judges governed...” Ruth is right in the middle of Judges. Judges 17:6, “In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” Judges is the story of a moral deterioration. It is almost depressing to read about some of the sins in these chapters; immorality, darkness, murders, rapes, homosexuality, and idolatry. If any book can be called a moral desert, it is the Book of Judges.

It is important to understand that Ruth took place in those days because unless you knew that, you would never guess it, because the Book of Ruth is such a breath of fresh air. Ruth is a wonderful illustration of an oasis in a desert. I think Ruth would be a wonderful book anyplace in the Bible, but it is a more wonderful book because of its setting in the days of the Judges. You see, the question that we need to ask, and that the book raises, “Is it possible to have an oasis in a moral desert?” God does want to create out of us corporately and individually, an oasis in the desert. You do not have to be a scholar to know that this world is a desert, and everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes, and there is no King in the land.

Here is the great truth of the Book of Ruth. In every moral desert where Jesus Christ is known in reality, there is an oasis in that desert. I do not care how bad it gets. No matter how dark, no matter how dismal the environment, God intends that there be an oasis of refreshment, of life, of abundance and of fruit.

One thing I love about the Book of Ruth is that it sweeps away all the excuses that men give for their lives. “What can you expect from so and so? He was not loved by his parents. He was abused as a child, and he had to grow up in that environment.” “What can you expect from someone who has experienced such tragedy?” Well, I will tell you what God expects. He expects an oasis in the desert. God has provided in Christ Jesus everything necessary for us to be an oasis in the desert.

A person is always the product of his environment. So, do you see why it is so important that Jesus Christ be your environment? You are going to become the environment in which you live. What the

atmosphere is to the bird and what the water is to the fish, Christ is to the believer and fellowship with God. We were created to have God as our element, as our environment, and we are to live in Him and move in Him. It is quite incidental how bad the conditions were in our past or how bad they are now; where we live, where we work, where we go to school or where we transact our business. Do not have the idea, "What can you expect?" God expects an oasis, and He illustrates it in the book of Ruth. It shows the possibilities of victory in an environment of defeat.

I do not want you to get the idea that if God burns the message of Ruth into your heart that your life is going to turn into an oasis without problems. You see, the whole point of Ruth is that it's an oasis in the middle of a desert. The problems do not go away. What good is an oasis if it is not in the desert? Just from a quick scan, here are some of the problems Ruth dealt with; widowhood, backsliding, past sin, in-laws, love affairs, idolatry, prejudice, capital, labor, poverty, relocating, courtship, marriage, faith, facing the future, losing loved ones, selfishness and old age.

The Book of Ruth is a sociological masterpiece. Anyone who ever writes a book on human behavior should study the Book of Ruth. It is brilliant the way God has given us the solution to all of these problems. God wants us to become like Ruth, an oasis in the desert where everything around us is all messed up and cold and indifferent, and people are failing, and lives are dry and fruitless and defeated, and hearts are broken.

The first step, the first spiritual event, if we are going to become an oasis in the desert, is returning to the place of fullness, coming back to Bethlehem, coming back to where we were when we first got saved. That is how the book of Ruth begins – in the place of fullness. You can never be an oasis until you begin there. Moab just represents everything outside of Christ. It can be good, it can be bad and it can sound quite spiritual. Anything except Jesus is Moab.

Bethlehem, "The House of Bread", is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fullness is not a goal; fullness is the starting point. In this book, fruit is the goal. We are moving toward the production of the Lord Jesus Christ and giving Him to the world, but it all starts in fullness. There are a thousand and one reasons we leave fullness and go to Moab. Maybe we try to find fullness in spiritual gifts or in Christian service or in Christian fellowship or in education or in the

world. We leave fullness and all we find is emptiness. But once we come back, that is the beginning of the oasis in the desert.

Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion left the place of fullness because of a famine, because they said there was no bread in the House of Bread. They did not understand fullness and they went off to Moab, and they spent ten years in Moab and shed a lot of tears in the land of Moab. Naomi loses her husband, and she loses her two sons. Then, God finally opened Naomi's eyes and she heard that the Lord had visited His people in Bethlehem. She lifted her head toward Bethlehem, and saw the visitation of God and that there was blessing in the land of fullness. So, she decided to go back to Bethlehem. As soon as she purposed in her heart to go back, God already began turning the curse into a blessing, and it was at that point that Naomi led Ruth, her daughter-in-law, to the Savior.

Now, Naomi was not planning to lead Ruth to Christ. You see, when you lead somebody to Christ you usually do not say to them, "Go back to your gods." You usually do not use that sentence in order to win somebody to the Lord. That is what Naomi said to Ruth. Ruth 1:15-17, "'Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law.' But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me!'"

What a tremendous thing! As soon as Naomi decides to go back to Bethlehem, God begins using her for blessing. The curse is already being turned into a blessing because God had put Bethlehem in Ruth's heart. Ruth also wanted to go to Bethlehem, and God begins to use her.

The second step is the courting by Boaz as kinsman redeemer who is a picture of Christ. After returning to Bethlehem, Ruth began to glean in a field of grain owned by a kinsman of Naomi's deceased husband, whose name was Boaz. Boaz courts her, and he woos her, and he tries to win her heart and romance her unto himself. He charges his servants to watch out for her safety. He instructs his reapers to drop handfuls on purpose so she can gather and so she can glean. Ruth 2:1 says that he is a mighty man of wealth. He is a kinsman who is in every way qualified to redeem her. He loves her. And though he is strong, and rich, and though he is qualified as a kinsman, and though he is

willing, we see that his hands are tied. He can only go so far.

The third step is appropriation. Ruth must appropriate Boaz. Ruth must reach out and take that mantle and pull it over herself, and say, “All you are and all you have I claim as mine.” The simplicity of faith is that she just had to claim it. That is what springs God into action and allows Him to create out of her an oasis in the desert.

The fourth step is grace. Grace is what God does. Law is what man does. Right from the beginning of the book, Ruth was a doer. She was doing, doing, doing, and doing. Boaz had to tell her that he would do for her. Ruth 3:11, “And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.” Ruth needed to learn about rest.

That brings us to the final stage. What can the last stage be except marriage and union and the fruit of that relationship? And so Boaz marries Ruth. I love Ruth 4:10. “Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today.”

Since this is the consummation and everything has been moving toward this marriage, let me speak of the consummation and the fruit of that relationship. Ruth 4:13, “So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.” Ruth blessed the world by giving birth to Obed; to give the world Jesse; to give the world David; to give the world Psalms through David and to give the world a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fruit is always the outworking of a relationship. It is the result of union. Christians need to learn that fruit is something that is produced naturally through a very personal and intimate relationship; it is not something that is artificially put on.

In the history of redemption, who have been channels for the greatest blessings in the church world? It’s been those who have come back to Bethlehem. It’s those who have most known Him. It’s those who have walked in an unbroken union with Him. It’s those who have known for sure that He has dealt with everything that stood in the way and, like Ruth, have become an oasis in the desert in this dark and immoral world. Those are the ones that produce fruit in the Christian life. God creates in them and out of them, the Life and character of Christ, an oasis in the desert, and the world is blessed.

MESSAGE OUTLINES FOR THE 10 FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE EXCHANGED LIFE MESSAGE #1

- I THE EXCHANGED LIFE IS ILLUSTRATED AND DEMONSTRATED BY TWO TITLES OF JESUS
 - A. THE LAST ADAM (ROMANS 5:14; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:45)
 - B. THE SECOND MAN (1 CORINTHIANS 15:47)
- II CHRIST AS THE LAST ADAM
 - A. WHAT IS MEANT BY “THE IMAGE OF GOD”?
 1. MAN IS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD (GENESIS 1:26-27)
 2. THE IMAGE OF GOD IS CHRIST HIMSELF (2 CORINTHIANS 4:3-4; COLOSSIANS 1:15 HEBREWS 1:3)
 - B. GOD’S ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS FOR MAN TO DISPLAY CHRIST
 - C. WHAT DID ADAM LOSE WHEN HE SINNED?
 1. MANY THINGS (DOMINION, INNOCENCE, BRAIN POWER ETC)
 2. HE LOST UNION WITH CHRIST; HE WAS SEPARATED FROM WHAT MADE MAN, MAN (EPHESIANS 2:12; EPHESIANS 4:18)
- III THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST INTRODUCES US TO CHRIST AS THE SECOND MAN
 - A. INCARNATION: THE GOD-MAN; GOD IS PUT BACK IN THE MAN

- B. HOW DOES JESUS DESCRIBE THE LIFE HE LIVED IN HIS INCARNATE BODY AS THE SECOND MAN?
 - 1. HE DESCRIBES IT AS LIVING ON EARTH BY THE GIFT OF GOD'S GLORY (JOHN 17:22-23; REVELATION 21:23)
 - 2. HE DESCRIBES GLORY AS "UNION WITH HIS INDWELLING FATHER (JOHN 17:21; JOHN 17:23)
 - 3. HE PROMISED TO GIVE HIS CHILDREN THE SAME GLORY HIS FATHER GAVE HIM (JOHN 17:21; JOHN 17:23)
- C. WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE WHEN HE LIVED BY THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER?
 - 1. HE INITIATED NOTHING (JOHN 8:28-29)
 - 2. HE HAD NO PRIVATE WILL BUT DID THE WILL OF THE FATHER (JOHN 6:38; MATTHEW 26:39)
 - 3. THE FRUIT OF HIS LIFE WAS THE WORKS OF THE FATHER (JOHN 10:37-38; JOHN 14:10)
 - 4. HE SOUGHT ONLY THE FATHER'S GLORY (JOHN 8:50; JOHN 7:18; JOHN 12:27-28)
 - 5. HE ONLY SPOKE BY REVELATION (JOHN 14:24; JOHN 12:49)
 - 6. HIS GREAT CONFESSION: (JOHN 14:9; JOHN 12:45)

IV THE LAST ADAM AND THE SECOND MAN WERE SENT ON A JOURNEY TO A FINAL DESTINATION

- A. THE DESTINATION WAS WORLD REDEMPTION (JOHN 3:17; JOHN 6:39; LUKE 19:10; 1 JOHN 4:10; 1 JOHN 4:14)
- B. FOLLOW HIS JOURNEY
 - 1. MARY'S WOMB; BETHLEHEM (MICAH 5:2)
 - 2. NAZARETH
 - 3. WILDERNESS
 - 4. GALILEE (LUKE 4:14-15)
 - 5. REDEMPTION (GETHSAMANE; CALVARY; EMPTY TOMB)
 - 6. BACK TO GALILEE (MATTHEW 26:32; MATTHEW 28:7; MATTHEW 28:16-17)
 - 7. JERUSALEM (ACTS 1:5; ACTS 1:9; JOHN 14:16-18)
- C. HE HAS YET TO REACH HIS DESTINATION (JOHN 10:16; JOHN 17:20; ISAIAH 53:11; JOHN 6:37)

D. BY THE EXCHANGED LIFE HE CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY

1. HE INDWELLS US (JOHN 17:22)
2. HE SENDS US AS THE FATHER SENT HIM (JOHN 20:21)
3. WE LIVE ON HIM AS HE LIVED ON HIS FATHER (JOHN 6:57)
4. HE WORKS THROUGH US (JOHN 14:12)

V WHAT DOES THE EXCHANGED LIFE LOOK LIKE?

- A. WE DO NOT INITIATE
- B. WE DO NOT SEEK OUR OWN WILL
- C. WE DO NOT SEEK PERSONAL GLORY
- D. WE PRODUCE FRUIT FROM HIM NOT WORKS FROM OURSELVES
- E. WE MOVE, AS HE DID, BY REVELATION

FAITH MESSAGE #2

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE ON FAITH

- A. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH (HEBREWS 11:6; ROMANS 14:23; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 GALATIANS 3:11)
- B. TWO WELL KNOWN BIBLE STORIES TO ILLUSTRATE FAITH
 1. THE DISCIPLES ON THE STORMY SEA (MARK 6:45-52) HOW FAITH RELATES TO JESUS
 2. THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED JESUS' HEM (MARK 5:25-34) SECRET OF FAITH

II TEXT AND CONTEXT OF THE STORY OF THE DISCIPLES ON THE STORMY SEA

- A. TEXT: MARK 6:45-52 TESTING THE DISCIPLES TO SEE IF THEY LEARNED THE LESSON OF THE LOAVES: TRUSTING JESUS TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE
- B. CONTEXT: MARK 6:51-52 THE LESSON OF THE LOAVES (HOW TO OBEY AN IMPOSSIBLE COMMAND (MARK 6:37 "YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT")
- C. THE REALITY TEST ON THE STORMY SEA (MATTHEW 14:22; MARK 6:45)

- D. DESCRIPTION OF THE STORMY CONDITIONS AND DISCIPLES FRUSTRATIONS (JOHN 6:18; MATTHEW 14:24; JOHN 6:19; MATTHEW 14:25)

III THREE POSSIBLE WAYS TO RELATE TO JESUS ILLUSTRATED BY THIS STORY

- A. JESUS ON THE MOUNTAIN PRAYING; THE DISCIPLES ON THE STORMY SEA (MARK 6:46-47)
- B. JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER; THE DISCIPLES ON THE STORMY SEA (MARK 6:48)
- C. JESUS ON THE BOAT WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE STORMY SEA (MARK 6:51)

IV PURE FAITH: JESUS ON THE MOUNTAIN PRAYING OUT OF SIGHT OF THE DISCIPLES (MATTHEW 14:23; MARK 6:46; MARK 6:45)

- A. THE TRANSITION TO JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER: STRAINING AT THE OARS (MARK 6:46-48)
- B. THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CONDITION OF THE DISCIPLES STRAINING AT THE OARS (JOHN 6:20-21)

V ALL SIGHT: JESUS IN THE BOAT WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE STORMY SEA (MARK 6:51-52)

- A. MIRACLE NUMBER ONE: THE WIND STOPPED (MATTHEW 14:32)
- B. MIRACLE NUMBER TWO: ARRIVING AT DESTINATION (JOHN 6:21)

VI MIXTURE—FAITH AND SIGHT: JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER (MARK 6:48-50)

- A. THEY SEE A GHOST (MIXTURE OF FAITH AND SIGHT)
- B. WHAT JESUS INTENDED BY WALKING ON THE SEA
 1. HE INTENDED TO PASS BY; HE DID NOT WANT TO COME ABOARD (MARK 6:48)
 2. HE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF TO REMOVE FEAR (MARK 6: 50-51)
 3. HE INTENDED THAT THEY KNEW ALL WAS UNDER HIS FEET, FULLY CONTROLLED (MARK 6:48)

4. HE WILL WORK A MIRACLE FOR US IN RESPONSE TO UNBELIEF, NOT FAITH (JOHN 6:21)
5. HE MILDLY REBUKES UNBELIEF (MARK 6:52)

VII FINAL ILLUSTRATION: THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED HIM BY TOUCHING THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT (MARK 5:30-31)

- A. CHRIST IS THE OBJECT OF FAITH: A SENSITIVE SAVIOR
- B. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN UNBELIEF AND STRUGGLING FAITH
- C. FAITH IS REDEMPTIVE (MARK 6:56) SHE STARTED A TRADITION

REVELATION MESSAGE #3

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE ON THE NEED FOR REVELATION

- A. CHRIST IS THE THEME OF ALL THE SCRIPTURES (LUKE 24:27; JOHN 5:39-40; JOHN 6:45)
- B. ONLY THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAN REVEAL CHRIST (MATTHEW 16:16-17; EPHESIANS 1:17-18)
- C. OVERVIEW OF HOW I DESIRE TO DEVELOP THIS MESSAGE ON REVELATION
 1. I WANT TO PRESENT CHRIST UNDER THE TITLE “THE WORD”
 2. I WANT TO SHOW THE APOSTLE PETER’S DYING TESTIMONY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION

II THE REVELATION OF CHRIST AS THE WORD

- A. ILLUSTRATED IN THE PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (JOHN 1:1; JOHN 1:14)
- B. WORDS ARE USED FOR COMMUNICATION (MANY ILLUSTRATIONS)
- C. GOD’S PROVISION FOR HELPING US UNDERSTAND THE WORD “GOD”
 1. GOD SENDS HIS SON AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US (JOHN 1:14)
 2. GOD GIVES THE BIBLE

3. GOD PROVIDES THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SHOW US CHRIST IN THE BIBLE (JOHN 16:13; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:11,12; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:16)

III THE APOSTLE PETER'S DYING TESTIMONY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION (2 PETER 3:18)

- A. PETER REFLECTS BACK ON THE MOUNTAIN OF TRANSFIGURATION EXPERIENCE (MATTHEW 16:28-17:8; MARK 9:1-8; LUKE 9:28-36)
 1. STRANGE PROPHECY (MATTHEW 16:28)
 2. POSSIBLE EXPLANATION: TRANSFIGURATION (MATTHEW 17:1-8)
 - a. DETAILS OF GLOWING GARMENTS (MARK 9:3)
 - b. DETAIL OF JESUS PRAYING (LUKE 9:28)
 - c. DETAIL OF THE APPEARANCE AND DISAPPEARANCE OF MOSES AND ELIJAH (LUKE 9:31)
 - d. DETAIL OF SUGGESTION TO BUILD 3 TABERNACLES (MARK 9:6)
 - e. DETAIL OF DISCIPLES SLEEPING (LUKE 9:32)
 - f. DETAILS OF THE GLORY CLOUD (LUKE 9:34)
- B. PETER EXPLAINS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION: A REVELATION OF HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE TO BEHOLD JESUS IN THE WORD
 1. PETER EXPLAINS THE PROPHETIC WORD AND THE REVELATION OF CHRIST (2 PETER 1:16-18)
 2. THE PROPHETIC WORD IS THE BIBLE WITHOUT THE REVELATION OF CHRIST, ALSO CALLED A LAMP SHINING IN A DARK PLACE (2 PETER 1:19)
 3. THE PROPHETIC WORD MADE MORE SURE, ALSO CALLED THE RISING OF THE MORNING STAR IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S REVELATION OF CHRIST IN THE BIBLE (2 PETER 1:19)

4. CHRIST IS THE MORNING STAR (REVELATION 22:16)

IV CLINCHER: THE HOLY SPIRIT'S REVELATION OF CHRIST IN THE SCRIPTURES IS THE ONLY WAY TO MATURE IN CHRIST (2 PETER 3:18)

REST MESSAGE #4

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE OF REST

A. HOW "PEACE" RELATES TO "REST" (2 THESSALONIANS 3:16)

1. ANXIETY IS THE PROOF I AM NOT RESTING
2. PEACE IS THE FRUIT OF REST

B. HOW DOES "GOD RESTED" RELATE TO "OUR ENTERING GOD'S REST"? (HEBREWS 4:4; 9-10)

1. GOD'S REST IS NOT
 - a. INACTIVITY (JOHN 5:17)
 - b. RETIREMENT FROM WEARINESS (ISAIAH 40:28)
 - c. GOD HAD NO ANXIETY ABOUT CREATING THE UNIVERSE (HABAKKUK 3:3-4)
2. THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION: GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. . .VERY GOOD (GENESIS 1:4, 10,12,18, 21,25,31; 2:1-2) AND HE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE FINISHED WORK OF CREATION
3. WHAT WAS TRUE OF THE FINISHED WORK OF CREATION, IS ALSO TRUE OF THE FINISHED WORK OF REDEMPTION (JOHN 19:30; LUKE 9:31; HEBREWS 1:3; HEBREWS 8:1; HEBREWS 10:12; HEBREWS 12:2; HEBREWS 4:10 EXODUS 12:13)

II WE ENTER HIS REST, NOT WHEN WE ARE SATISFIED WITH HIS FINISHED WORK, BUT WHEN WE ARE SATISFIED THAT HE IS SATISFIED WITH HIS FINISHED WORK (HEBREWS 3:11,18: HEBREWS 4:3,10)

III WE ENTER HIS REST WHEN WE ARE SATISFIED
THAT HE IS SATISFIED WITH HIS UNFINISHED
WORK OF REDEMPTION (PHILIPPIANS 1:6;
1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24; 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18;
1 JOHN 3:2; ROMANS 8:30)

IV STRONG ILLUSTRATION OF HIS UNFINISHED
WORK (ISAIAH 64:8; JEREMIAH 18:1-6) THE
POTTER AND THE CLAY (JEREMIAH 18:1-2)

- A. BEHOLD THE POTTER'S MIND (JEREMIAH 18:3-6)
- B. BEHOLD THE POTTER'S HANDS (JEREMIAH 18:3)
- C. BEHOLD THE POTTER'S FOOT (JEREMIAH 18:3)
- D. BEHOLD THE POTTER'S HEART (JEREMIAH 18:4)

V CLOSING ILLUSTRATION: JESUS SLEEPING ON THE BOAT ON
THE STORMY SEA (MATTHEW 8:24)

- A. MISUNDERSTANDING OF FAITH (MATTHEW 8:26 (b);
MARK 4:40)
 - 1. COMING TO THE END OF SELF (MATTHEW 8:25)
 - 2. ROLLING THE PROBLEM ON JESUS
(MATTHEW 8:25)
 - 3. GETTING OUT OF THE WAY AND WATCHING
JESUS DO WHAT ONLY HE COULD DO
(MATTHEW 8:26)
- B. CORRECT VIEW OF FAITH: LETTING JESUS
SLEEP; BEING SATISFIED THAT HE IS IN
FULL CONTROL

REDEMPTIVE LIVING MESSAGE #5

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE ON
REDEMPTIVE LIVING

- A. ALL THINGS ARE REDEMPTIVE AND BRING GOD
GLORY BECAUSE GOD IS SOVEREIGN (EPHESIANS
1:11; JOB 42:2; PSALM 135:6; PSALM 103:19)
 - 1. APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT
 - a. DESCRIBE "REDEMPTIVE LIVING"

- b. APPLY “REDEMPITIVE LIVING” AS IT RELATES TO A CHRISTIAN ABIDING IN CHRIST
 - 2. GOD CONTROLS ALL THINGS IN TERMS OF REDEMPTION (JOHN 3:17; LUKE 19:10; 1 JOHN 4:14; 2 PETER 3:9 EPHESIANS 1:22;)
 - a. THE CRUCIFIXION BY WICKED MEN WAS REDEMPITIVE (ACTS 2:23-24)
 - b. THOSE WHO TRIED TO MOCK HIM ACTUALLY PRAISED HIM (MATTHEW 27:29,37,42,43; MATTHEW 27:25; ROMANS 11:30; ROMANS 11:36)
- B. ALL THINGS ARE REDEMPITIVE AND BRING GOD GLORY WHEN WE SUBMIT TO HIS LIFE WITHIN US (JOHN 15:4-5; JOHN 15:8; MATTHEW 5:16; GALATIANS 1:15-16; GALATIANS 1:24; 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20; 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31)

II THREE ILLUSTRATIONS OF REDEMPITIVE LIVING FOR THOSE ABIDING IN CHRIST

- A. THE CHILD ILLUSTRATION SHOWS THE INDISPENSIBLE CONDITION OF REDEMPITIVE LIVING
 - 1. CHILDLIKENESS IS A REQUIREMENT FOR DISCIPLESHIP (MARK 9:35-37 MARK 9:42; MARK 10:13-16)
 - 2. PRIDE AND LUST FOR GREATNESS IS THE BACKGROUND OF THIS PRINCIPLE (MARK 9:33-34 ;LUKE 9:47; MARK 9:34)
 - 3. CHILDLIKENESS IS NOT A DISPOSITION; IT IS THE CONDITION OF HELPLESS DEPENDENCE (EPHESIANS 4:14-15; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1; 1 CORINTHIANS 14:20; MATTHEW 11:16-17; LUKE 18:15)

- B. THE GARDEN ILLUSTRATION SHOWS THE INDISPENSIBLE DISPOSITION OF REDEMPTIVE LIVING (SONG OF SOLOMON 4:12-15)
 - 1. THE BRIDE’S DISCOVERY: SHE IS HIS GARDEN (SONG 4:12; SONG 4:9)
 - 2. TOTAL AND ABSOLUTE SURRENDER IS THE BRIDE’S DISPOSITION TO THAT DISCOVERY (SONG 4:16)
- C. THE GRAIN OF WHEAT ILLUSTRATION SHOWS THE INDISPENSIBLE GOAL OF REDEMPTIVE LIVING (JOHN 12:20-21; JOHN 12:24)
 - 1. THE SEEKING GREEKS ILLUSTRATE THE REDEMPTIVE PART
 - 2. BECOMING A GRAIN OF WHEAT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD ILLUSTRATES THE GOAL OF REDEMPTIVE LIVING (JOHN 12:27-28; JOHN 12:32-33)

III CLINCHER: TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS
 (2 CORINTHIANS 4:7; 2 CORINTHIANS 4:10;
 2 CORINTHIANS 4:11-12)

FRUIT MESSAGE #6

I THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “WORKS” AND “FRUIT”

- A. HOUSE BUILT ON ROCK AND HOUSE BUILT ON SAND IDENTIFIED BY THE FOUNDATION (MATTHEW 7:25’ MATTHEW 7:27)
- B. WORKS AND FRUIT ARE IDENTIFIED BY THE SOURCE AND ORIGIN (GALATIANS 5:19, 22; GALATIANS 5:22)
 - 1. BAD WORKS ARE WORTHLESS (GALATIANS 5:19)
 - 2. GOOD WORKS ARE WORTHLESS (1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3)
 - 3. THE WORD “WORKS” IS SOMETIMES USED FOR “FRUIT” (MATTHEW 5:16; JAMES 2:26)
- C. FRUIT ISSUES FROM THE LORD (HOSEA 14:8)

1. CHRIST IS OUR SOIL (COLOSSIANS 2:6-7; ISAIAH 37:31)
2. CHRIST IS OUR VINE (JOHN 15:4-5)
3. CHRIST IS OUR GROOM (ROMANS 7:2-4)
4. CHRIST IS OUR VERY LIFE (2 CORINTHIANS 4:10-11)

II PETER AND JOHN AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATE FRUIT: THE POWER OF THE LORD THROUGH THEM (ACTS 3:1-9; ACTS 4:29-31)

- A. PETER SAYS “LOOK ON US” (ACTS 3:4)
- B. PETER SAYS “WHY DO YOU GAZE AT US?” (ACTS 3:12)
- C. PETER’S HAND RAISES THE LAME MAN TO HIS FEET (ACTS 3:7)
- D. THE LORD’S HAND RAISES THE LAME MAN TO HIS FEET (ACTS 4:30)
 1. THIS WAS A MIGHTY MIRACLE
 - a. CRIPPLED FROM BIRTH; MORE THAN 40 YEARS OLD (ACTS 3:2; ACTS 4:22)
 - b. HIS FIRST STEPS WERE LEAPING AND PRAISING GOD (ACTS 3:8)
 2. PETER GIVES JESUS CREDIT FOR THE MIRACLE (ACTS 3:6; ACTS 3:16; ACTS 4:7; ACTS 4:10; ACTS 4:17-18; ACTS 4:30; ACTS 5:40-41)

III STEPHEN ILLUSTRATES FRUIT AS HE MANIFESTS THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST (ACTS 6:5; ACTS 6:8)

- A. THE WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS ARE THE WORDS OF A CRUCIFIED MAN
 1. THE FIRST WORD: A WORD OF FORGIVENESS (LUKE 23:34)
 2. THE LAST WORD: A WORD OF SURRENDER (LUKE 23:46)
- B. STEPHEN IS A CRUCIFIED MAN (ACTS 7:54-58)
 1. JESUS REPEATS THROUGH STEPHEN THE FIRST WORD ON THE CROSS (ACTS 7:60)
 2. JESUS REPEATS THROUGH STEPHEN THE LAST WORD ON THE CROSS (ACTS 7:59)
- C. THE CONVERSION OF PAUL IS PART OF STEPHEN’S FRUIT (ACTS 7:58)

IV CLINCHER VERSES (PHILIPPIANS 2:13;

VICTORY MESSAGE #7

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE ON VICTORY IN JESUS

- A. TOPIC LARGER THAN VICTORY OVER INDWELLING CORRUPTION (GALATIANS 5:17; ROMANS 7:15; ROMANS 7:18-19; GENESIS 25:22-23)
- B. WE WILL USE THE WORD “WORLD” TO SHOW THE SCOPE OF OUR VICTORY (JOHN 15:18-19; MARK 4:18-19; JAMES 4:4; 1 JOHN 2:15-17)
 - 1. THE LUST OF THE FLESH (PLEASURES)
 - 2. THE LUST OF THE EYES (RICHES)
 - 3. THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE (HONOR AND DIGNITY)
- C. THE “WORLD” IS SET OVER AGAINST “THE WILL OF GOD” (1 JOHN 2:17)

II THE DOCTRINE OF VICTORY: VICTORY IS IN A PERSON: HIS NAME IS JESUS (2 CORINTHIANS 2:14; ROMANS 8:37; JOHN 10:10; GALATIANS 6:14; JOHN 16:33)

- A. JESUS HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD: 100 % EVERYTHING THAT STANDS BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WILL OF GOD (JOHN 16:33)
- B. WE ARE “IN CHRIST” THE ONE WHO HAS VICTORY (JOHN 16:33; ROMANS 6:8-11; 1 JOHN 5:4)
- C. THE RELATION OF ROMANS CHAPTER 7 TO ROMANS CHAPTER 8
- D. THE WAY OUT OF CHAPTER 7 AND THE ENTRANCE OF CHAPTER 8 IS BY SAYING “THANK YOU!” (ROMANS 7:25)

III THE OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROCESS OF VICTORY (DANIEL CHAPTER 2)

- A. THERE ARE 2 KINGDOMS: WE MUST BE DELIVERED FROM THE KINGDOM OF SATAN AND BE DELIVERED UNTO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST (COLOSSIANS 1:13)
- B. THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE KINGDOM OF MAN IN DANIEL CHAPTER 2

1. GOD REVEALS NEBUCHADNAZZAR'S DREAM TO DANIEL (DANIEL 2:19 & 22-23)
2. THE DREAM ITSELF (DANIEL 2:31-36)
3. DANIELS INTERPRETATION: SUMMARY OF WORLD HISTORY
 - a. HEAD OF GOLD = BABYLON
 - b. ARMS OF SILVER = MEDES AND PERSIANS
 - c. THIGHS OF BRONZE = GREECE
 - d. LEGS OF IRON = ROME
 - e. TOES OF CLAY AND IRON = CONFEDERATION OF 10 NATIONS IN THE END TIMES
4. THE TWO PARTS OF THE DREAM
 - a. IT IS THE IMAGE OF A MAN: THE KINGDOM OF MAN
 - b. IT IS THE IMAGE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD
5. SPIRITUAL SIGNIFIGANCE OF THE DESCRIPTION OF THE IMAGE OF MAN
 - a. IT IS AWESOME; FEARFUL (DANIEL 2:31; DANIEL 4:10; DANIEL 3:1)
 - b. IT IS A DEAD STATUE
 - c. THE IMAGE LOSES VALUE AS YOU MOVE TOWARD THE FOUNDATION
 - d. THE IMAGE OF MAN HAS A WEAK FOUNDATION AND IS DOOMED TO FALL
6. SPIRITUAL SIGNIFIGANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD (DANIEL 2:34-35)
 - a. THE LIVING STONE CUT WITHOUT HANDS IS JESUS GROWING INTO A MOUNTAIN THAT FILLS THE ENTIRE EARTH (DANIEL 2:34)
 - b. THE WIND PICTURES THE HOLY SPIRIT (DANIEL 2:35)WHAT JESUS KNOCKS DOWN, THE HOLY SPIRIT BLOWS AWAY

CONFORMITY TO CHRIST MESSAGE #8

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MESSAGE ON CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

- A. USUALLY DISCUSSED UNDER THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION
- B. SOMETIMES DEALT WITH WHEN DISCUSSING THE TRUTH OF GROWING IN THE LORD (2 PETER 3:18; MARK 4:28)
- C. SOME RELATE “CONFORMITY” TO CHRIST TO THE TWIN TRUTH: I GROW IN CHRIST; HE GROWS IN ME (EPHESIANS 4:13; GALATIANS 4:1)

II SIMPLE OUTLINE OF MESSAGE

- A. THE STARTING POINT, RESTING PLACE AND GUARANTEE OF BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST
- B. THE PROCESS OF BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST
- C. THE CONSUMMATION OF BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST

III THE STARTING POINT, RESTING PLACE AND GUARANTEE OF BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST WITH THE BIBLE ILLUSTRATION.

- A. THE BIBLE ILLUSTRATION (SEEDS PRODUCING AFTER THEIR KIND) IN GENESIS (GENESIS 1:11-12, 20-21, 24-25; GENESIS 5:3)
- B. THE “SEED” OF GOD IS IN THE CHRISTIAN GUARANTEEING THE CONFORMITY (1 JOHN 3:9)

IV THE PROCESS OF BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST WITH A BIBLE ILLUSTRATION

- A. THE PROCESS STATED (2 CORINTHIANS 3:18; JAMES 1:22-25)
- B. THE ILLUSTRATION IS THE BIBLE PICTURED AS A MIRROR (2 CORINTHIANS 3:18)
 - 1. WITH THE NATURAL EYE I SEE MY NATURAL SELF AS I STAND IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR
 - 2. WITH AN UNVEILED FACE, I SEE HOW GOD SEES ME IN CHRIST JESUS

3. RELATING THE GAZE AND THE GLORY (JAMES 1:24) IF I QUIT GAZING, I QUIT GROWING
- C. ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT THE PROCESS OF CONFORMITY TO CHRIST LOOKS LIKE (PSALM 23)

V THE CONSUMMATION OF BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST AND THE BIBLE ILLUSTRATION

- A. THE MIRROR-IMAGE WILL BECOME THE REALITY (1 JOHN 3:2)
- B. THE BIBLE PICTURE IS THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST (2 CORINTHIANS 5:10)
 1. THE ISSUE AT THE BEMA SEAT IS NOT SIN: GOD WILL NOT COLLECT THE SAME DEBT TWICE
 2. THE HEART OF THE ISSUE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
 - a. CONFORMITY TO CHRIST (1 JOHN 3:2)
 - b. EVERYTHING THAT IS CONTRARY TO CHRIST WILL BE BURNED UP (1 CORINTHIANS 3:13-15)

UNION MESSAGE #9

I INTRODUCTION TO THE UNION WITH CHRIST MESSAGE

- A. BIBLE DISCRIPTIONS OF UNION WITH CHRIST ABOUND
 1. ABIDING IN A VINE; RELATING TO A SPOUSE; PARENTING A CHILD; RELATION OF HEAD TO THE BODY; SUN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE EARTH; THE UNION OF SOIL AND VEGETATION
 2. THE MANY REFERENCES TO BEING "IN CHRIST" ILLUSTRATE UNION
 3. UNION WITH CHRIST IS PATTERNED/MODELED AFTER THE TRINITY (JOHN 17:21)
- B. SIMPLE OUTLINE OF THIS MESSAGE
 1. HOW UNION WITH CHRIST RELATES TO LORDSHIP ILLUSTRATED BY THE UNION OF JESUS AND MARY

2. HOW UNION WITH CHRIST IS PICTURED BY THE FLOW OF LIFE FROM THE BRAIN TO THE BODY
3. AS A CLINCHER, I WANT TO MENTION THE METAPHOR OF MARRIAGE AS THE HEART OF UNION

II HOW UNION WITH CHRIST RELATES TO LORDSHIP ILLUSTRATED BY THE UNION OF JESUS AND MARY

- A. MARY IS THE FIRST PICTURE OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
 1. HER CONTRIBUTION WAS TO GIVE CHRIST TO THE WORLD (COLOSSIANS 1:28-29)
 2. SHE GAVE CHRIST TO THE WORLD WHEN, BY A MIRACLE, THE HOLY SPIRIT FORMED CHRIST IN HER (LUKE 1:35)
 3. MARY WAS A RECEIVER OF THAT ACT OF GRACE (LUKE 1:38)
 4. IN THE FULNESS OF TIME, SHE GAVE CHRIST TO THE WORLD (GALATIANS 4:4)
- B. MARY'S UNION WITH JESUS ILLUSTRATED WHEN JESUS WAS 12 YEARS OLD PICTURES OUR UNION (MARK 3:33-35; JOHN 12:26)
 1. JESUS WAS SUBMISSIVE TO HIS PARENTS (LUKE 2:41-42)
 - a. MARY HAD EXPECTATIONS OF JESUS BASED ON HER RELATIONSHIP TO HIM (LUKE 2:44)
 - b. JESUS DISAPPOINTED THOSE EXPECTATIONS (LUKE 2:48; LUKE 2:43)
 2. JESUS PRESENTED A PRINCIPLE TO MARY WHEN HE WAS 12 YEARS OLD (LUKE 2:49) HE HAD TO BE ABOUT HIS FATHER'S *EVERYTHING*
 3. MARY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE BUT PONDERED IT IN HER HEART (LUKE 2:51)
- C. 18 YEARS LATER, WHEN JESUS BEGAN HIS MINISTRY AND TURNED WATER INTO WINE, MARY UNDERSTOOD (JOHN 2:2-5)
 1. THE PRINCIPLE: WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU, DO IT (JOHN 2:5; JOHN

12:26)

2. JESUS IS NO LONGER SUBMITTING TO MARY; MARY HAS LEARNED TO SUBMIT TO JESUS
3. UNION WITH JESUS IS LORDSHIP

III HOW UNION WITH CHRIST IS PICTURED BY THE FLOW OF LIFE FROM THE BRAIN TO THE BODY

A. JESUS IS THE HEAD

1. JESUS IS THE LAST ADAM, THE FEDERAL HEAD OF THE RACE
2. JESUS IS THE HEAD OF ALL THINGS IN THE SENSE OF AUTHORITY (EPHESIANS 1:22; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:3; COLOSSIANS 2:10)
3. JESUS IS TO HIS PEOPLE WHAT THE BRAIN IS TO THE BODY (COLOSSIANS 2:18-19)
 - a. FACTS CONCERNING THE PHYSICAL BRAIN
 - b. UNION WITH CHRIST IS PICTURED BY THE UNION OF THE BRAIN TO THE BODY (COLOSSIANS 2:19)

C. AS MY HEAD, CHRIST IS BOTH THE COMMANDER AND THE ENABLER OF ALL THINGS; THE BRAIN IS A GIVER, THE BODY IS A RECEIVER AND RESPONDER: I MUST SIMPLY LIVE FOR THE PLEASURE OF THE HEAD

- #### C. AS MY HEAD, CHRIST IS A UNIFIER; THE BODY HAS COMMON LIFE
1. CHRIST ENABLES ME TO BE ONE WITH HIM

2. CHRIST ENABLES ME TO BE ONE WITH ALL BELIEVERS

IV CLINCHER ILLUSTRATION: UNION WITH CHRIST IS A ROMANCE (2 CORINTHIANS 11:2; ROMANS 7:4 HE NOT ONLY LOVES YOU, HE IS IN LOVE WITH YOU BIBLE USE OF THE WORD “KNOW” (GENESIS 4:1 HOSEA 6:3; SONG 2:16)

THE GREAT COMMISSION MESSAGE #10

I INTRODUCTION TO THE GREAT COMMISSION MESSAGE

- A. THE INSIDE STORY OF THE GREAT COMMISSION IS FOUND IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**
 - 1. RECORDS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION**
 - a. GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (MATTHEW 28:18-20)**
 - b. GOSPEL OF MARK (MARK 16:15-18)**
 - c. GOSPEL OF LUKE (LUKE 24:49)**
 - d. BOOK OF ACTS (ACTS 1:8)**
 - e. GOSPEL OF JOHN IN PICTURE FORM (JOHN 21)**
 - 2. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN GIVES THE “HOW?” OF THE GREAT COMMISSION**
- B. VICTORIOUS FISHING: PART 1 OF THE GREAT COMMISSION (JOHN 21:1-14)**
- C. VICTORIOUS SHEPHERDING: PART 2 OF THE GREAT COMMISSION (JOHN 21:15-23)**

II THE BACKGROUND FOR THE FIRST PART OF THE GREAT COMMISSION: VICTORIOUS FISHING

- A. COMMAND TO GO TO GALILEE TO MEET THE RISEN SAVIOR (MATTHEW 26:32; MATTHEW 28:7; MATTHEW 28:10; MARK 16:7)**
- B. CONFUSION AS TO WHERE TO MEET JESUS: UPPER GALILEE? LOWER GALILEE? CANA? NAZARETH; MOUNTAINS? SEA?**
- C. PETER DECIDES TO GO FISHING (JOHN 21:3)**
 - 1. DOES THAT MEAN HE IS QUITTING AND RETURNING TO HIS OLD LIFE?**
 - 2. DOES THAT MEAN THAT, UNTIL JESUS SHOWS UP, HE WILL CONTINUE TO LIVE AND DO WHAT HE DOES BEST? GO FISHING!**
- D. THREE TRUTHS ABOUT FISHING GOD’S**

WAY THAT ARE ILLUSTRATED BY THE
STORY

1. AS A “FISHER OF MEN”, I AM NOT QUALIFIED TO FISH (JOHN 21:5)
2. JESUS IS QUALIFIED TO BE THE FISHERMAN (JOHN 21:6)
3. JESUS DOESN'T NEED US AS HIS INSTRUMENTS BUT HE DESIRES TO USE US (JOHN 21:9)

III THE SECOND PART OF THE GREAT COMMISSION
ILLUSTRATED BY PETER'S FULL RESTORATION:
SHEPHERDING

- A. THE KEY TO BEING USED AS HIS INSTRUMENT IN SHEPHERDING: THERE MUST BE NO CONDEMNATION
 1. THE MEMORY OF THE PREVIOUS CATCH OF FISH (LUKE 5:8)
 2. THE CHARCOAL FIRE ON THE SHORE (JOHN 21:9; JOHN 18:18)
 3. THE REFERENCE TO PETER USING HIS PRE-SALVATION NAME: “SIMON” (JOHN 21:15; JOHN 1:42)
 4. THE QUESTION REPEATED 3 TIMES: DO YOU LOVE ME? (JOHN 21:15; 21:16; 21:17)
- B. THE INVITATION OF PETER TO “COME AND DINE” IN FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS (JOHN 21:12)
- C. THE MAIN POINT ABOUT SHEPHERDING
 1. NOT THE GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE, FEED AND SHEEP
 2. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE QUESTION THAT QUALIFIES US TO BE HIS INSTRUMENTS. DO YOU LOVE ME?

IV JESUS SAYS FOR PETER WHAT HE CANNOT SAY
FOR HIMSELF: YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN DENY
ME! (JOHN 21:18-19)

V. HOW CAN I ENTER INTO THE GREAT
COMMISSION?

- A. JUST LIVE: BE WHO YOU ARE
- B. JUST LOVE JESUS

“I Have Christ”

By Ed Miller

How rich I'd be if I could own
One piece of Heaven's gold.
The world would gather at my door
To see this wealth untold.

O what a joy if I could taste
The fruit of Heaven's tree;
And walk through mansions in the sky
How very rich I'd be!

If I could view the sea of glass,
The throne of the Most High,
How full my heart if I could see
The angels in the sky!

If I could talk to Heaven's saints
And hear them testify
Of Jesus' blood and saving power
Who'd be as rich as I?

But I have Christ! He's Heaven's Gem;
The glory of that place!
There's Heaven in my soul today.
I have the God of Grace!

Meditation Notes

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