



**Bible Teaching
& Publications**

All the Promises Of God are YES

By

Alan Taylor

Managing Director

JO-AL Bible Teachings & Publications

www.jo-al.com

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JO-AL Bible Teaching & Publications is based in Melbourne, Australia, and was founded by Alan and Joan Taylor in 2009. Alan and Joan have experience in pastoring and pioneering churches, and in travelling teaching, worship and music ministry. At the same time, they have established a successful secular technical consulting company.

A Note from the Author

In [2 Corinthians 1:20](#), the Apostle Paul tells us that:

“all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

And [Hebrews 6:12](#) urges us to:

“not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

The door to God’s wonderful promises is open, it’s up to us to enter!

All the Promises of God are YES

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All the Promises of God are YES

1. God's Benefits

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits." (Psalm 103:2)

We live in a day when many are concerned about receiving benefits from employer or government. While these are important, they **PALE INTO INSIGNIFICANCE** with the benefits available from God! Let's look at them as recorded in Psalm 103:3-5:

"Who forgives all your iniquities"

"Who heals all your diseases"

"Who redeems your life from destruction"

"Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies"

"Who satisfies your mouth with good things"

"Your youth is renewed like the eagle's"

Clearly, these amazing benefits are **WAY BEYOND** the ability of governments or employers to provide!!! However, Jesus tells us in Matthew 19:26 that **"with God all things are possible"**.

So how do we receive these wonderful benefits? We do it by **FAITH** in God's Word that **"all of God's promises are yes to us in Christ Jesus"** (Hebrews 6:12).

2. All Things Are Possible

"All things are possible to him who believes." (Mark 9:23)

Mark 9 records the dramatic encounter between Jesus and a man in crisis, whose son was suffering from life threatening convulsions caused by a demonic spirit. The man in desperation said to Jesus: "if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us". Not being able to believe for a miracle from Jesus, he appealed to His compassion.

But note Jesus' response. Instead of sympathizing with him, he challenged him to believe: **"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."**

Then the man now realizing that the problem was his own unbelief cried out with tears: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

This encounter carries some vital lessons for overcoming the challenges which face us in our everyday lives:

Firstly - ALL things are possible through Christ.

Secondly - The onus is upon US to believe.

Like the man in Mark 9, most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, know that we sometimes struggle with unbelief in receiving God's wonderful promises. If so, we are in good company, for in Luke 17 the disciples asked Jesus to **"increase our faith"**.

The Bible tells us that **"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"**, Romans 10:17. So a key to building up our faith and countering unbelief is to seek out, and make up our mind to believe, the promises clearly presented in God's Word. Another key is when we pray, to believe that God has granted our request and persevere with **thanksgiving** and praise for the answer until it comes to pass (Philippians 4:6).

All the Promises of God are YES

3. He is Able and Willing

"our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king." (Daniel 3:17)

"He is able to deliver thee" is the title of a classic old hymn. Those who have often sung this hymn in church have become conscious of God's **ability** to deliver us, which is great. However, many are not as familiar with the second part of the verse **and He WILL deliver us**. Over the years this has been reflected in prayers and testimonies which acknowledge God's ability **BUT ARE LESS CERTAIN OF HIS WILLINGNESS**.

Let's face it, it is impossible to pray in faith if we are uncertain as to God's willingness. This is made abundantly clear in James 1:6-8.

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

No one has faced a more daunting test of faith than the three young Hebrews in Daniel Chapter 3 when they were threatened with the fiery furnace. Yet they believed that God was not only able to deliver them, **BUT THAT HE WOULD**, and they boldly declared it to the King of what was then the major world super power. (Daniel 3:17)

How did they know God would deliver them? **They got it from God's Word**, Isaiah 43:1-3, with which they would be familiar, says:

"Fear not.....When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Such faith as this cannot be suddenly switched on when we face a crisis. It can only spring from a **lifestyle of faith in God's Word**. As we apply faith to the day to day challenges of life our faith will grow, and we will be better equipped to face up to greater trials when they come our way.

All the Promises of God are YES

4. God's Word + Faith = Results

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord." (James 1: 6-8)

James was clearly a plain speaker – someone who believed in "telling it like it really is". Here he tells us that in order to receive from God we must ask in faith, but if we doubt we will **RECEIVE NOTHING** from Him.

He may not have pleased everyone by saying this, but he did us all a big favour by laying out the truth on this vital topic.

He clearly put the **responsibility on us to believe** when we are asking God for something, and told us that if we are double-minded we will receive **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING**.

The Bible contains many illustrations. For example, God made some wonderful promises to the Israelites when He brought them out of a life of bondage in Egypt. However, out of the millions who started out, **only two adults, Joshua and Caleb**, reached the Promised Land. Hebrews 4:2 tells us why:

"the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."

Mixing faith with the Word of God is how we are born again into the Kingdom of God, and Hebrews 6:12 urges us to **CONTINUE** believing and inheriting God's wonderful promises.

"do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Let's put doubt, double-mindedness and sluggishness behind us and press on into the promises of God.

5. "Lay Hold" of What Christ Has for Us

"I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." (Philippians 3:12)

Paul here reveals one of the great secrets of his life in Christ. He wasn't passive; he didn't sit back waiting for the things of God to come to him; no – he went after them **TO LAY HOLD OF THEM.**

There are many other examples in the Bible of people who had this attitude. For example, Mark 5:25-34 tells us about the woman who came up behind Jesus and touched His clothes to receive healing. She laid hold of her healing **without even asking Jesus!**

Another fascinating story is told in 2 Kings 7. Samaria had been besieged by the Syrian army and the people were virtually starving. Then four lepers sitting outside the city gate decided they had nothing to lose and went to the Syrian camp to surrender in order to avoid starving to death.

When they got there they found it empty – God had caused the Syrians to hear the sound of what they thought was a great army coming against them, and they had fled.

After eating and drinking, the lepers' consciences pricked them, and they went back to tell the people in the city, who at first thought it was a trick, but then rushed over to grab the food, drink and spoil. So here is a case where **all that the city needed was just sitting there**, but it took the desperation of the four lepers to lay hold of it.

The Apostle Peter tells us that God has provided all that we need for **"life and godliness"**, 1 Peter 1:2, but it doesn't just fall into our laps. **WE HAVE TO LAY HOLD OF IT.** James 2:26 makes it clear that **"faith without works is dead"**, and will not achieve anything.

In Philippians 3:17, Paul urges us to **"join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern"**. Let's make up our minds to take Paul's advice. We can be sure that he knew what he was talking about! As we do so, we will **EXPERIENCE INCREASE AND GROWTH.**

6. We Need to Have Confidence Towards God

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him" (1 John 3:21-22)

Here John tells us that to receive from God we need to have **confidence** towards Him, and to have confidence our heart must be free from condemnation. In Romans 8.1 Paul reveals that **"there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"**. This means that we should base our daily relationship with God on **who we are in Christ** and not on how we think we may be performing as Christians. Let's face it, **WE WILL NEVER BE SATISFIED WITH OUR PERFORMANCE**, and therefore we always suffer some degree of condemnation if we think along those lines.

Once and for all, let's make up our minds to change from a self-imposed performance based life, get rid of condemnation, and **LIVE CONFIDENTLY IN THE LOVE OF GOD**. (And by the way, let's not allow anyone else to heap condemnation on us, whoever they may be!)

7. Believing Before Seeing

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

Jesus said this to Thomas who had said that he **would not** believe that Jesus had risen from the dead unless he **saw** Him and **touched** the wounds in His hands and side.

Jesus had previously appeared to the other apostles when Thomas was absent. We can be sure that He never did anything by chance – so obviously He wanted to deal with an issue in Thomas' life. The fact was that Thomas was locked into the common view that **seeing is believing**, and Jesus wanted to teach him, and future believers down through the ages, that **God's way is totally the opposite – believing comes before seeing.**

It is **vital** that we grasp this principle in order to receive answers to our prayers and to receive the promises of God. Jesus made this absolutely clear in Mark 11:24:

"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

This is a difficult concept for our natural mind to grasp, which is one of the reasons why **we need to have our minds renewed by the Word of God.**

A good way to look at it is how we receive the benefits of a judgment in our favour in a court hearing. We go to court and plead our case based on the law of the land, and as soon as the judge decides in our favour we start to celebrate. We know that we have the benefit although we have not yet seen or touched it – that comes later.

1 John 5:14-15, the Apostle John teaches along these lines:

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

So we need to see ourselves coming boldly before the throne of God with our request based on the promises in His Word. Then, because we ask according to His revealed will, we know He will grant our request, and we can start to celebrate. As we continue to thank and praise Him for the answer, and persist in the belief that it is ours, **it will eventually come to pass.**

8. The Power of Persistence

Jesus taught His disciples that **persistence is a key to successful prayer** (Luke 11:1-10 and 18:1-8).

In fact, in Luke 11:8, Jesus used a stronger word – importunity – which means **SHAMELESS PERSISTENCE!** He illustrated this with the story of a man who kept knocking on his neighbour's door at midnight till he reluctantly got out of bed to give him what he needed. In Luke 18, the story is different, but the message is the same. This time an insignificant widow forced a powerful judge to rule in her favour simply by wearing him down by her persistence.

It's very revealing that James, when teaching about prayer for healing, used the example of Elijah praying for rain, which had nothing to do with healing (James 5:17-18). The outstanding features of Elijah's prayer are that it was fervent and persistent. **In other words, he was determined to get the rain which God had promised to send, and kept at it till he saw that it was on the way!**

All these examples tell us that **REAL FAITH PERSEVERES TILL THE ANSWER COMES.** The Bible presents Abraham as the supreme example of faith; he persevered many years before God's promise came to pass and his son Isaac was born. Abraham's persistence over a long time is also a great example of what Jesus taught in Luke 18:1 ***"that men always ought to pray and not lose heart"***.

9. When We Inherit God's Promises We Bring Him Glory

*"For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."
(2 Corinthians 1:20)*

This scripture makes it absolutely clear that God wants us to inherit His promises. Not only do we get blessed, but it **BRINGS HIM GLORY** as it is a testimony to His grace, power and love towards His people. God is so keen for us to inherit His promises that He has told us in advance that His answer is **YES** in Christ.

Another wonderful truth revealed in this scripture is that He wants us to inherit not just some, but **ALL** of His promises. How do we do this? Hebrews 6:12 urges us to:

"imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Hebrews 11 provides a list of heroes and heroines of faith to imitate. Faith comes from the Word of God, and we need to study the scriptures describing the lives of these examples God has given to us.

Note that **NO TWO HEROES OR HEROINES OF FAITH ARE THE SAME**. God obviously likes variety, and **He does not want us to see faith as a method**.

We should also take note that faith is only 50% of the requirement. The other 50% is **PATIENCE**, an increasingly rare commodity in today's instant society.

As an example of faith and patience, there is surely none greater than Abraham as he waited for God's promise of a son to come to pass over many years. What was his secret? Well we are told in Romans 4:20-21 that he was fully convinced that God would keep His Word, and while he waited he gave **GOD THE GLORY**. Thus not only does God get the glory when we inherit the promises, but **He receives glory while we persist in faith**.

10. Thanksgiving – A Key Ingredient of Prayer

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

Thanksgiving is a **key ingredient** of prayer. What do we thank God for? Obviously not for the problem otherwise we wouldn't be praying for His help! No, but we can thank Him for the promises in His Word. We can thank Him for granting our request made in Jesus's name. We can thank Him that the answer is on the way; that His power is already working on our behalf. For example, if we are looking for a healing we can thank Him that His healing power is at work in us; that we are recovering. We can thank Him for all the times He has helped and blessed us in the past.

Romans 4:20 tells us that while Abraham waited for the promise of a son to come to pass, **he gave glory to God and was strengthened in faith**. Likewise, as we praise and thank God for the answer to our prayer, our faith is strengthened and our hearts and minds are filled with his peace, and on top of all that, God is glorified.

The Psalmist obviously knew the benefits of thanksgiving when he proclaimed:

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.” (Psalm 100:4)

And so did the Apostle Paul when he exhorted us to:

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

which reveals that thanksgiving is more than a benefit, **it is the will of God for us!**

11. He Took Our Infirmities and Bore Our Sickness

Matthew 8:16-17 reads:

"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses'."

It is universally accepted that this refers to Isaiah 53:4. Yet this verse in the NKJV and KJV Bibles reads:

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"

At first sight this appears to be confusing. However, it all becomes clear when we see that the Hebrew words translated "griefs and sorrows" can also mean "**sicknesses and pains**" and are translated this way in other passages in the NKJV and KJV Bibles. Also, some other Bible translations do in fact use "**sicknesses or diseases and pains**", including the JPS 2017 Jewish Bible (Jewish Publishing Society). Others include notes pointing out the alternative meanings.

The confusion is very unfortunate, as it has hidden from many of God's people the great truth that **HEALING AND DELIVERANCE ARE INCLUDED IN THE ATONEMENT.**

This is why the next verse, Isaiah 53:5 declares:

"by His stripes we are healed"

Some claim that this refers to spiritual healing. However, we can confidently accept the **authoritative word of the Apostle Matthew** who clearly understood that it referred to physical healing and deliverance from demons, and in fact was the basis for the healing ministry of Jesus.

Thus, healing is not something that God may or may not do, **IT IS A VITAL PART OF OUR SALVATION** along with the forgiveness of sins. Jesus linked them both together in Matthew 9:5 when He asked:

"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk?'"

It is significant that the religious people of His day found it easier to believe in healing than in forgiveness of sins. Yet today it seems to be the opposite way around! One of the reasons for this is the confusion in the translation of Isaiah 53:4. Let us once and for all, decide to **believe Matthew's word that Jesus suffered and died on the cross to give us healing** as well as forgiveness, and use this as the basis for our prayers. If we have the faith to have our sins forgiven, **then we already have the faith to be healed.**

12. She Ought to Be Loosed

“So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (Luke 13:16)

When Jesus saw a woman bent over with a spirit of infirmity He laid His hands on her and loosed her. In response to criticism that he was working on the Sabbath day, He **revealed a vital truth** about God’s attitude towards healing His people. He said that she **OUGHT** to be healed because she was a **daughter of Abraham**. In other words, it was **HER RIGHT TO BE HEALED BECAUSE OF THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH ABRAHAM AND HIS DECENDANTS**.

Romans 4:16 tells us that Abraham is our Father too, **which makes us his sons and daughters**:

“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”

This clearly means that we also **OUGHT** to be healed. If it was that woman’s covenant right, then it is also **OUR COVENANT RIGHT!**

It’s fair to say that there is a general reluctance among God’s people to approach God on this basis. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why we experience such mixed results in praying for healing. We also need to realize that His covenant promises are binding and are based on faith and not on our performance or perceived worthiness.

From now on, let’s **“come BOLDLY to the throne of grace”** (Hebrews 4:16). Like the woman who was loosed, some of us have suffered many years from conditions from which we **“OUGHT TO BE HEALED”**.

13. Who Do You Say That He Is?

Is this not the carpenter?.....Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them." (Mark 6:3 & 5)

In His own home town, they **only saw Jesus as the carpenter**. They didn't see Him as the Messiah, or even a prophet, and because of this Jesus couldn't do any mighty works there. Notice the Bible says that He **COULDN'T**, and not that He wouldn't. Their unbelief actually **prevented** the flow of the miraculous through Him to them.

Today, as then, there are many opinions as to who Jesus is. For example, some say He is only a great teacher or a religious leader, and do not see Him as the Son of God, the Saviour of the World. Until they change this view, they will be unable to enter into His great salvation and receive eternal life. Likewise, those who say He doesn't heal today are unlikely to be healed, and those who say He doesn't baptize in the Holy Spirit today rarely receive this blessing from Him.

One day, Jesus asked His disciples **"who do you say that I am?"** (Matthew 16:15). This is a vital question which each of us must resolve in our hearts as our answer will, to a large extent, determine what He is **ABLE** to do for us.

14. Undermining God's Word – Satan's Secret Weapon

"Has God indeed said?" (Genesis 3:1-5)

Satan's secret weapon is revealed in how he brought about the downfall of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3:1-5. **HE UNDERMINED GOD'S WORD.** He sowed seeds of doubt telling them that they couldn't trust God's Word, and that God had lied about why they shouldn't eat the fruit from the tree. Adam and Eve fell into the trap with devastating consequences to us all. It took the supreme sacrifice of God's only Son to provide us with a way back into fellowship with God.

"A sower went out to sow" (Matthew 13:3)

In the parable of the sower, Jesus reveals that Satan is still following the same plan. He warns us that the **real purpose** underlying the things that Satan brings against us is **to attack God's Word** - to rob us of it, or choke its effectiveness or to persuade us give it away.

A critical time for every believer is when facing a major trial and the promises in God's Word don't seem to be coming to pass. This is the time when the enemy will come and ask **"Has God indeed said?"**

Many a Christian has given up on a promise in God's Word at a time like this – indeed some have even fallen away from the Lord altogether.

Fellow Christians, especially those close to the situation, can likewise be seriously affected.

If we begin to distrust the Word of God, we will fall into the very trap that the enemy has set for us. We need to follow the many examples given to us in the scriptures of people who trusted God and His Word no matter what! Job faced a greater onslaught of Satan than most of us ever will. He then had to face cross-examination from his friends as to why it had happened when God promises His blessings to the righteous. Job didn't have the answer, but in Job 13:15 he said **"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"**, revealing that, despite His great trials, he had made up his mind to trust God no matter what! Undoubtedly this played a major role in bringing him back into the blessings of God. Another great example is Abraham, who had to face up to the unfulfilled promise of a son for decades, but still continued to believe God till the answer eventually came.

We are all in a battle against a ruthless and unscrupulous enemy, and need to be aware of his tactics and **"fight the good fight of faith"**. The scriptures tell us that God's Word is **"more to be desired than gold"**. So let's be on our guard against the wiles of an enemy who is trying to rob us of this most valuable possession.

15. Unbelief – The Original Sin

What was the original sin? Was it the murder of Abel by Cain? The answer is no; it was something less obvious but far more devastating and far reaching. In fact it was the **UNBELIEF** of Adam and Eve. God clearly told them that they would die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan undermined their belief in God's Word, and they went ahead and ate, as recorded in Genesis 3:1-6. Abel's murder came later.

Unbelief in God's Word has been the **ROOT** of all of the problems of mankind ever since. Salvation basically involves a **REVERSAL** of this situation, whereby **we make a decision to become a BELIEVER**. This started with Abraham who believed God, and his belief was "**accounted to Him as righteousness**", Romans 4:3. So too when we believe God's Word about Jesus and the Cross and His resurrection, it is **accounted to us** as righteousness.

But it does not stop there. As believers we must go on to live our lives based on belief in God's Word. This is not only a way of life, but it is also vital in order for us to enter into all that God has for us. Numbers 20:7-12 tell us that Moses and Aaron **missed out on the Promised Land due to UNBELIEF**. They were clearly provoked and exasperated by the continual grumblings and complaints of the people. The consequences were serious - premature deaths for both of them as well as losing the incredible opportunity of leading Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan.

Unbelief plagued the Israelites throughout their wilderness journey, and eventually prolonged it by another 40 years! Hebrews 3:19 reveals that Israel **never entered into their full inheritance because of unbelief**, and this came to a climax when as a nation they did not believe that Jesus was their Messiah.

In order to enter into all that God has for us, we need to see that **unbelief ties God's hands**, and decide to believe God's Word at all times and in all circumstances.

16. Access to The Father

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” (Matthew 27:50-51)

The crucifixion of Jesus is at the centre of God’s plan of salvation, and immediately after He “yielded up His spirit” a spectacular event took place - the veil of the temple was torn into two pieces from top to bottom. The Scriptures reveal that this was symbolic of the sacrificial death of Jesus which provided a new way for both Jews and Gentiles to have access to the Father:

“Therefore brethren having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh.” (Hebrews 10:19-20)

“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:18)

Under the Old Covenant, only the high priest had access to the mercy seat beyond the veil, and that only once per year with the sacrificial blood and after strict preparation. But through the blood of Christ, we now have the incredible privilege of a **permanently “open door”** to the Father. And the Apostle Paul goes even further, declaring that we can use our access to the Father **boldly** and **confidently**:

“in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” (Ephesians 3.12)

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

God desires all men to be saved, and He needs us to **use our access to Him** to appeal to His mercy and grace for them, and for those in authority to be favorably disposed towards believers:

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

A man once said that it was the hardest thing for him to pray. That was because he had not yet gained access to the throne of grace. We need to remember that we were all once in his shoes and must help others by appearing before God on their behalf.

17. Called to the Banqueting Room, Not the Kitchen

One of most famous passages in the Bible is the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. When he finally came to his senses and decided to return home, he thought that he could only go back as a **HIRED SERVANT**. At least he would have food to eat. He believed that he had totally forfeited his right to be a son, and could not imagine that his father would reinstate him.:

"I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." (Luke 15:19)

However, when he arrived home and tried to explain his thinking, his father simply ignored him and called the servants to prepare a banquet in his honour. All his father cared about was that his son was still alive and had come home.

As believers we can identify with this story and see it as a picture of when we decided to turn to God, and found Him ready to welcome us "home". However, even though we know that He has forgiven our sins, sometimes we find it difficult to comprehend that He actually receives us into the full benefits of His family. Like the prodigal, we sometimes feel unworthy and "head for the kitchen" as servants instead of accepting His invitation to His "banqueting room" as sons.

It's of vital importance that we **SEE OURSELVES AS GOD'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS**, as it affects the whole foundation of our spiritual life.:

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God." (1 John 3:1)

One of the important roles of the Holy Spirit is to witness to our spirit that we are indeed children of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). If we try to live as servants "in the kitchen" we risk missing out on God's best for our lives.:

We need to constantly remind ourselves that this is an honour bestowed upon us by the love and grace of God through Christ, and has **nothing to do with our "performance"**. One of the oldest strategies of the enemy is to accuse us that we are not doing enough for God. We overcome him by **faith in what God's Word says about us:**

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12)

Let's make a decision right now to exercise that right and live our lives in our Father's "banqueting room", partaking of all the wonderful things He has prepared for us.

18. The Promise of the Father

The final command Jesus gave to His disciples at the crucial time before His ascension was to wait in Jerusalem for the **Promise of the Father – the Baptism with the Holy Spirit**, which had been prophesied in Joel 28-32 and by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11:

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:4-5)

“you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

The fulfillment of the Promise of the Father is described in Acts 2:2-4:

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The immediate effect of this dramatic demonstration of the Holy Spirit was to draw a huge crowd of devout Jews visiting Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, who were amazed when each of them heard the believers speak in his own native language. Then Peter, who had not long ago denied even knowing Jesus, seized the opportunity to preach boldly resulting in about 3,000 converts from nations around the world, many of whom would spread the gospel when they journeyed back home. Thus the Lord's command to remain in Jerusalem before embarking on His commission to be His witnesses to the ends of the Earth was already bearing fruit! Some of the other purposes and results of the baptism with the Holy Spirit include:

- Spiritual gifts and signs to confirm the preaching of the word (Mark 16:15-20 & Acts 14:3).
- Spiritual gifts to meet the needs of believers (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).
- To empower believers to function in their ministries and activities in the Body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8).
- Spiritual gifts to edify believers in church gatherings (1 Corinthians 14:1-5).
- Spiritual gifts to be a sign to convince visiting unbelievers that God was among them (1 Corinthians 14:20-25).
- To enable individual believers to edify themselves and build up their faith by praying in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:4 & Jude 1:20).
- Dreams and visions to provide guidance for preaching of the Word and about future events.

Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2: 28-39 clearly reveal that the will of God is for all believers to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. If the disciples, **after three years of personal training by Jesus**, and the early believers needed to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, **HOW MUCH MORE** do we need it today to be His witnesses to our generation.

All the Promises of God are YES

19. True Righteousness

"the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe." (Romans 3:22)

Righteousness is one of the most misunderstood concepts, and yet it is **ABSOLUTELY FUNDAMENTAL** to being a Christian. It is commonly equated to having good morals and doing what is right. However, as commendable as this is, man's highest standard of righteousness is not sufficient in the sight of God. In fact, the Bible reveals that no-one has achieved righteousness acceptable to God!

"There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10)

The way to true righteousness is revealed to us through the life of Abraham:

"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Romans 4:3)

Abraham's **believing**, or in other words **his faith**, was counted by God as righteousness. What did Abraham believe? The answer is found in Genesis 15:5:

"Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

It took a huge step of faith for Abraham to believe this promise, seeing he and his wife were old and childless. But he did, and God counted his faith as righteousness. For us, the pattern is the same, **THOUGH THE PROMISE IS DIFFERENT**. Romans 10:9-10 tells us that our challenge is to believe in the resurrection and Lordship of Jesus:

"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

When we do this, God counts our faith as righteousness:

"...much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17)

THUS TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IMPARTED AS A GIFT TO US BY GOD, and has nothing to do with our good works or high morals. Having grasped this, we must not then fall into the common trap of trying to live a "righteous" life based on service and good works. Living in true righteousness means **continuing to live a life of faith in Christ and God's Word**. Service and good deeds are the **RESULT** of true righteousness, not the way to achieve it. Trying to be "righteous" inevitably leads to frustration and condemnation. Instead, let's live a life of faith and enjoy the freedom and abundant life Christ promised us.

20. The Law is Not for Us – It Cuts Us Off from Christ!

“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the Law...Christ will profit you nothing.” (Galatians 5:2-4)

The Law of Moses was a big issue in the early church. There was a strong and vocal faction of the Jewish church in Jerusalem, especially the former Pharisees, who tried to make keeping the Law mandatory for all Christians. Paul, who as a former Pharisee himself knew the Law intimately, vigorously opposed this push, and the main theme of his letter to the Galatians was devoted to this issue. His opposition eventually led to a confrontation with the Apostle Peter, recorded in Galatians 2:11-21. Peter seemed unable to deal with the problem, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Lord called Paul to be the **“apostle to the Gentiles”**, and why he seemed to work relatively independently from the original twelve apostles. Eventually, the matter was settled at a meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15:6-29. Their decision was that **CIRCUMCISION AND THE LAW OF MOSES DID NOT APPLY TO GENTILE CHRISTIANS!**

Paul warned believers that getting entangled with the Law has **VERY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES:**

Firstly, it actually SEPARATES us from Christ, who will then be of NO BENEFIT to us. (Galatians 5:2)

Secondly, it brings us UNDER THE CURSE for not keeping the WHOLE Law. (Galatians 3:10)

This warning is just as relevant to us today, as we still have a tendency to fall into the snare of trying to keep the Law in our desire to put the Word of God into practice and live holy lives. Common examples include keeping the Sabbath day, avoiding certain foods and drinks, and tithing.

Paul teaches us that **our spiritual heritage comes through Abraham not Moses**. Abraham was justified by faith and not by keeping the Law, which came much later. Galatians 3:6 tells us that Abraham was accounted righteous and received the blessings of God because he **BELIEVED GOD**. Likewise, righteousness and the blessings of God come to us because we **BELIEVE GOD**, not because we earn them by keeping the Law.

WE GENTILES WERE NEVER PUT UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES BY GOD; and If we put ourselves under, or allow others to put us under, it will **greatly hinder our relationship with Christ, block the flow of God’s promises in our lives and even bring us under the curse of the Law**. Our foundational beliefs have a defining impact on our lives. We need to ensure that our enemy hasn’t sown some of **“the leaven of the Pharisees”** into our hearts – it could be the root cause of some of the hindrances we experience!

21. My Father and Your Father

“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John: 17:26)

In John 5:17, Jesus said, **“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working”**. This may not seem very provocative to us, and yet it made His religious opponents want to kill Him. In their eyes, by calling God His personal Father, He was **“making Himself equal to God”**. When they thought of God as Father, they only saw Him as the Father of the nation. To call Him a personal Father was blasphemous in their eyes. Of course the reason that Jesus called God His Father was that **HE ACTUALLY WAS HIS FATHER**. He was conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit, and did not have a natural Father. By this means, He did not inherit man’s sinful nature.

But Jesus went even further – in John 20:17 He said **“I am ascending to my Father and your Father”**, showing His disciples that they too should call God their personal Father, **which must have been revolutionary to them! To many today IT IS STILL REVOLUTIONARY!**

People commonly call God Father today, for example in the Lord’s Prayer, without really seeing that God is their personal Father. And yet if we are a real believer, **THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT HE IS**. In John 3:3-8, Jesus taught that we must be born again by the Holy Spirit to see the Kingdom of God. Thus, the true Father of the new life in us is the Holy Spirit, **making us actual children of God**.

In His final prayer in John 17:26, Jesus reveals why it was so important for Him to declare God’s name (Father) to His followers – **“that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”** We need to understand that **GOD IS OUR TRUE FATHER** in order to receive and have confidence in His love and grace. Little children have confidence in the love of their parents, simply because they are their parents, and we will have confidence in the love of God when we see Him as our Father, **AND NOT BECAUSE OF OUR RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE**. So let’s draw near to Him today, and come boldly to the His throne of grace **as only children can**.

22. Greater Than John the Baptist?

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matthew 11:11)

This is one of those remarkable statements made by Jesus which we can pass over without really comprehending what He was saying! Let's stop and think about it carefully.

Firstly, He said that **no one born before John the Baptist was greater than him**, which in itself is a big statement, bearing in mind all the great people in the Bible such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Esther, and Daniel etc. However, we can understand how this can be so when we see the importance of John's ministry as the one chosen to **“prepare the way of the Lord”**.

It's the second part of Jesus' statement that is difficult to grasp – at least at first sight. How can anybody be greater than John and by implication greater than all the great Bible people? If He was talking about believers such as the great apostles Peter and Paul, we could understand it, but the **LEAST** in His kingdom – **how can this possibly be true? Let's face it this means that you and I are greater than all the prophets**, which is hard to swallow, especially when we think we are not performing well.

The key is to realize that **Jesus was not talking about what we do, but who we are**. The fact is that when we were **BORN AGAIN AS CHILDREN OF GOD**, we entered into a relationship and status that John the Baptist and all the Old Testament prophets never attained in their time on earth. The apostle John spoke about this when he said:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1)

1 Peter 1 10-12 tells us that the Old Testament prophets and even angels longed to know more about this great salvation which we enjoy; but it wasn't revealed until the coming of Jesus. In fact, Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 that it was **not possible even to see** the kingdom of God without being born again! Once we are born again we see it so clearly that we sometimes can't understand why others can't see it. However, we must always be conscious of how we used to be and what a great miracle the new birth really is.

Furthermore, we need to move beyond just seeing it as a wonderful truth and actually **apply it** to our personal relationship with God. Our status as His children means that we that we have ready access to Him as our loving Father, and can live confidently expecting to **experience His favour in our everyday lives**. It also means that He will hear our prayers and intercessions for those around us who do not enjoy the same relationship with Him.

Let's make a decision once and for all to **believe what the Bible says about who we really are**.

23. Transformed in God's Way

"be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

The Bible tells us that God wants us to be transformed when we become believers, and reveals how to go about it – **IT'S BY THE RENEWING OF OUR MINDS.**

Another key is found in Proverbs 23:7:

"as he thinks in his heart, so is he".

In other words, **WE ARE WHAT WE THINK WE ARE.** Thus, we need to form in our minds an image of what we want to be, and then see ourselves as **already being** that person. As we persevere with this image of ourselves, we will be transformed into it. On the other hand, if we continue to think of ourselves as falling short we will never experience change.

It may seem strange and unnatural, but this is how God Himself operates. In Roman 4:17, Paul tells us that God **"calls those things which do not exist as though they did"**. For example, He said that He had made Abraham the Father of many nations, **before** Abraham had any children. Another example is found in Judges 6:12, when the Angel of the Lord addressed Gideon as **"you mighty man of valour!"** when Gideon was preparing to hide his wheat from the Midianites! The Israelites used the same principle to their detriment in Numbers 13:33, and were defeated by how they saw themselves without even going into battle!

"There we saw the giants and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

So what image should we see ourselves as being? Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

"beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In other words, we need to imagine ourselves as looking into a mirror, and seeing the Lord Jesus as revealed in the Bible and not our old natural selves. As we do this, the **Holy Spirit does the transforming.**

When we see ourselves in the image of Christ, it is not wishful thinking; the moment we became believers, **we became a totally new person with a new nature – the nature of Christ.** However, like all of God's promises we must take hold of it by faith and work it out in our lives **using God's methods** as revealed in the Scriptures.

Trying to achieve transformation by our own efforts inevitably leads to frustration and disappointment about our lack of progress. **Let's do it God's way from now on!**

24. A Change of Citizenship

A citizenship ceremony can seem so simple, taking just a few minutes, and yet it is a life changing event. Although there is no outward visible change, the participants' status and destiny are fundamentally changed. At the moment the authorized representative of the government declares them to be a citizen, their allegiance is transferred from their former country. They can now enjoy the **full rights and benefits** of their new country.

A very different "citizenship ceremony" is described in Luke 23:39-43. One of the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus cried out Jesus "**remember me when you come into your Kingdom**". And Jesus replied "**today you will be with me in Paradise**". At that moment the man's citizenship and eternal destiny were **changed** and he became a **citizen of heaven**. It appeared so simple and perhaps unbelievable to the onlookers, and yet a profound change had occurred in the criminal's heart.

His words revealed that he had come to believe that Jesus was a King, that He had a Kingdom beyond death, that He could and would forgive his sins, and that He was willing to receive him into His Kingdom despite him not being able to do anything at all to deserve or earn it.

In Colossians 1:13 the Bible tells us that becoming a Christian involves a **CHANGE OF CITIZENSHIP** on a spiritual level – we are transferred into the Kingdom of God, with Jesus as our King. The experience of the criminal clearly tells that how and where we declare our allegiance to Jesus is not important, as long as it is from the **heart**. In the providence of God, he was given a last minute opportunity to **change his eternal destiny** – a wonderful example of the love and grace of God.

If you have not already done so, take your opportunity **RIGHT NOW** to change your citizenship and to enjoy the rights and benefits of the Kingdom of God **in this life as well as the next**.

All the Promises of God are YES

25. Trials – Times of Advance or Retreat

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” (James 1:2)

Most of us would regard the above words of James as a hard saying. But let’s look and see why he said it:

“knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 2:3-4)

He explains that the reason God allows trials to overtake us is to **test our faith**, producing patience and spiritual growth, making it into a positive rather than negative experience. Now what is the connection between patience and faith? Hebrews 6:12 tells us:

“do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Therefore, **PATIENCE AS WELL AS FAITH is** needed to inherit the promises of God, so that trials play an important role in our spiritual growth. It also tells us that patience in this context does not mean just enduring trials with a good attitude, but in **overcoming them** through God’s promises. It is encouraging to note that:

“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”. (1 Corinthians 10:13) (Note: The Greek word for temptation here is the same one translated trials in James 1:2 above.)

So that while we are growing in faith and patience He will only allow situations He knows we can handle to come our way. Of course we will most likely not feel that we can handle them, but that is all part of being “stretched”. Now it is vital for us to also be aware of what the enemy is trying to do through our trials. The Parable of the Sower in Mathew 13: 1-23 reveals that the purpose of the Devil is to **GET THE WORD OUT OF OUR HEART OR CHOKE IT TO MAKE IT UNFRUITFUL**, thus weakening or destroying our faith.

So trials are critical times in our spiritual journey. We can hold on to God’s promises believing that God will eventually bring us through, and advance in our spiritual growth, or we can allow unbelief to take root and retreat.

ONE VERY IMPORTANT WARNING: we must not judge the Word of God or the reliability of His Promises through our experience or the experience of others - **no matter who they are**. Just because we or others did not achieve a victory does not mean that God’s Word is not true! We need to see that the battle during times of trial centres around our faith and patience as well as God’s Word. Let’s do what Paul urged Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12 and **“fight the good fight of faith”** with perseverance and, as best we can, to count it all joy, not because we are in a battle, but that **“the battle is the Lords”**, and he **“gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”**.

All the Promises of God are YES

26. God Has Not Given to Us a Spirit of Fear

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

It seems like the world is full of fear – financial fear, fear of future weather patterns, fear of terrorism, fear of wars, fear of sickness, fear of accidents, and on and on. For believers, it's time to remind ourselves that the **FEAR IS NOT COMING FROM GOD**. On the contrary, as Paul reminded his young co-worker Timothy, that God intends for us to have **"power, love and a sound mind"**.

In John 14:27, Jesus urged us to:

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Job, despite being greatly blessed by God, let fear get into his heart and paid the price:

"For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me." (Job 3:25)

In contrast King David, who had good reason to fear, refused to do so and declared:

"Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident." (Psalm 27:3)

It's up to us to follow the example of David and **not to allow** fear to get into our heart by **FOCUSING ON WHAT GOD SAYS THROUGH HIS WORD** rather than what the world is saying and doing.

27. Those Who are With Us are More Than Those Who are With Them

An army facing a battle must make a realistic assessment of its own strength compared with the enemy in order to plan a strategy for victory. The same thing applies to the spiritual battle we find ourselves in when we become followers of Jesus Christ. As with any war, one of the weapons of our enemy is **DISINFORMATION**. He wants us either to think he is all powerful to make us fearful or, on the other hand, to play his power down and lull us into complacency. However, the truth is revealed to us in God's Word.

In 2 Kings 6:15-17, Elisha's servant was overwhelmed by the appearance of the army which surrounded him and Elijah. But Elisha was not at all fazed; **he knew that that the forces on their side were much greater**. When the servant's spiritual eyes were opened, he saw it too.

Let's look at our battle scene. The enemy certainly appears strong, and goes around seeking to devour, steal, and destroy.

On his side he has principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, one third of the angels and assorted demons. At first sight this appears formidable. **However, let's look at our side.**

Firstly, as commander-in-chief we have Jesus who has **already defeated their leader**, possesses all authority in Heaven and on Earth, and has given us authority over all the power of the enemy. Secondly, as field commander we have the Holy Spirit, the very power of God, to lead and empower us. Thirdly our weapons are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and include the shield of faith which can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and the all-powerful sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Finally, our forces include two thirds of the angels, who outnumber the enemy by at least two to one.

Certainly we need to be vigilant and on our guard. However, we should never give in to fear, as fear opens the door to the enemy. Like Elisha, we can survey the battle scene with confidence because we know that **those who are with us are more than those who are with them**.

28. We Must Not Let Our Mistakes Hold Us Back

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” (James 5:17-18)

Elijah achieved great things for God, but the Bible tells us that he was a **NORMAL PERSON WHO MADE MISTAKES** – just like us. When threatened by Queen Jezebel he ran away and prayed that he might die! (1 Kings 19:1-4) And Elijah is not an isolated example. **Many other Bible heroes** made mistakes, some of them big ones. Some examples include:

Abraham twice pretended that Sarah was not his wife through fear, yet the Bible calls him the **“father of all those who believe”**.

Abraham and Sarah attempted to help God out which resulted in the birth of Ishmael, causing family problems which are still with us today. But God **still fulfilled His promise** to give them their own son, Isaac.

Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of their father’s final blessing, yet God **greatly blessed him** and gave him a new name, Israel, which became the name of the nation.

Moses disobeyed God and missed out on the Promised Land, but the Bible says that there has **“never been another prophet like him”**, who knew God face to face.

Samuel failed to discipline his sons and they took bribes and perverted justice which led to Israel demanding to have a king. However, Samuel still went on **to play a key role for God**.

David committed adultery and sent a man to his death, yet God said he was **“a man after Mine own heart”**!

Peter denied he even knew Jesus, and the other disciples ran away when Jesus was arrested, but Jesus later **sent them to preach the gospel to the world** and to perform great miracles.

All of these should encourage us to put our own mistakes behind us and press on to serve God and to believe that He will continue **“to work in us both to will and to do for his good pleasure”**.

29. The Secret Place Revealed

*"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."
(Psalm 91:1)*

Where is this secret place? It's a question that every serious student of the Bible has wondered about. Psalm 31: 20 reveals the answer:

"You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence"

Put very simply, it is talking about **THE PRESENCE OF GOD**, which is normally **invisible** here on Earth.

So to find the secret place we need to ask **where is the presence of God on Earth today?** Now we know that God is omnipresent, but the Psalmist is talking about a special presence of God that is not experienced by everyone. The answer is clearly revealed in such scriptures as:

"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

"For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them.'" (2 Corinthians 6:16)

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

These and many other scriptures tell us that the presence of God is **WITHIN EACH BELIEVER** – a secret place that no one can see, but is nevertheless very real. Thus **wherever we are**, even in the midst of a crowd and in all circumstances we can "secretly" commune with God, pray and worship Him.

The Bible talks about **DWELLING in the secret place**. Thus we need to make it a lifestyle, not just when we have a special need. As we do so we can expect the wonderful promises of Psalm 91 to come to pass.

30. Reconciliation – Not Judgement

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:19)

To many people, Christianity appears to emphasize judgement and condemnation. Yet the truth is **exactly the opposite**. The very core of the Christian message is that God wants everyone to be **RECONCILED WITH HIM** and to enter into a close personal Father-child relationship with Him.

Believers have **NOT** been commissioned to condemn sin in the world, but to proclaim the wonderful news of forgiveness and reconciliation through Christ.

Jesus Himself said that:

“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:17)

And to the woman caught in adultery He said **“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more”** John 8:11. He told us that it is the **job of the Holy Spirit** to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8).

As believers let us see ourselves as **agents of reconciliation and not enforcers of condemnation and judgement**. As we do this, we can change the prevailing negative view of Christianity and help many to embrace the love and forgiveness that is God’s will for everyone everywhere. Let’s face it, none of us can afford to take a hard line on the actions of others, because **but for the grace of God we would be no different!**

31. The Cure for the Incurable Heart Problem

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)).

One day Jesus told the Apostle Peter that evil originates in the hearts of people. (Matthew 15:18-19). This means that the world is in the mess we see today because **we all have collectively made it so**. In Jeremiah 17:9, the Bible reveals that this is due to the human heart having an **INCURABLE PROBLEM**.

If our physical heart develops an incurable disease, there is only one thing to do - **swap it for a new one!** Many today are benefiting from this wonder of modern medicine - the heart transplant. But which surgeon is able to give us a new spiritual heart to change our very nature? Medical science cannot do it. Neither can politics, philosophy, meditation, **or even religion**. However, the good news of the Bible is that **JESUS CAN AND WILL** if we come to Him on his terms.

Fortunately, a spiritual heart transplant is **FREE**, and we don't need health insurance or a government program to pay for it. Jesus paid for it in advance when He bore our sins on the Cross. And we don't have to go to a hospital for our "transplant". Jesus is available for **"home surgery"**. In fact, it doesn't matter where we are when we approach Him - **JUST AS LONG AS WE ARE SINCERE**.

It's an offer **none of us can afford to refuse**. We need to take advantage of it today while it is still available. If you haven't already done so, receive Him as your Saviour and Lord right now and ask Him to forgive your sins and give you a new heart.

32. The Ongoing Ministry of Jesus

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

On the cross Jesus cried out **"it is finished"**, John 19:30, and so Christians talk about the "finished work of Christ". **HOWEVER, HIS MINISTRY TO US DIDN'T END THERE.** As our Great High priest and Advocate He continues to play a vital role in our lives by **continually interceding for us.** This provides the key to understanding what Paul meant when He said:

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Romans 5:10

Having died on the cross to provide the way for us to start a new life in fellowship with God the Father, He now **dedicates His life** to keep us from falling away by continuing to intercede with the Father for us.

We are all aware of the value of the prayers of other believers on our behalf, but **HOW MUCH MORE** valuable is the prayer support of Jesus Himself. A great example is how He foresaw that Satan would try to destroy Peter by pressuring him to deny Him. He prayed **ahead of time** that Peter would not only come through the crisis, but be able to strengthen the other disciples who would be shaken by Jesus' crucifixion, Luke 22:31-34.

This tells us that we need never think that we are alone in our struggles. We can always be confident that Jesus is aware of our situation when no one else seems to be, and that He is **more than able to bring us through.**

33. Jesus in Charge in Heaven and on Earth

*"Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'"
(Matthew 28:18)*

We need to constantly remind ourselves that **JESUS is in charge** no matter what seems to be going on around us, or whatever anyone else says! Instead of being frustrated or even fearful about events in our own country and around the world, we need to be inspired by 1 Timothy 2:1-4 and **pray for all who are in authority** that we might live quiet and peaceable lives, and that they might find salvation. The Bible is full of accounts of how powerful leaders were influenced by God. One of the most dramatic is the account of how God dealt with the great King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the book of Daniel.

Revelation 1:5 tells us that **Jesus is now "the ruler over the Kings of the earth"**, so we can pray with confidence in His name for God to work in and through the lives of the "kings" of our day.

Sometimes we may be frustrated by what we see happening among God's people and in the churches. So we also need to remind ourselves that **JESUS is still the Head of the true Church**. Again, we need to pray and believe that He is in charge and at work building **His church** and faithfully carrying out His duties as High Priest, Advocate and Great Shepherd on behalf of all His people. **The Holy Spirit is just as powerful as ever** and is still doing all the things that Jesus promised He would.

One of the things God wants and needs to see in His people is **CONFIDENCE** in His Word, power and love. An attitude of confidence in God, and in the future, can be one of our greatest witnesses to our generation.

34. Pray for "Babylon"

"seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace." (Jeremiah 29:7)

In a letter to the captives carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Jeremiah told them that the Lord wanted them to pray for the peace of Babylon as they were going to be there for 70 years. Now the Hebrew word used here for peace is **SHALOM**, which means **much more** than the English word peace. In fact, it encompasses peace, prosperity, welfare, safety, tranquillity, health, harmony and the absence of agitation or discord. If a single English word is to be used, then **wellbeing** or **welfare is** much closer to the true meaning.

It must have sounded very strange, even offensive, to the captives. Babylon was their arch enemy, and no doubt they would much rather have prayed for its downfall! What they did not realize was that God had sent them to Babylon for their good, to escape from the judgement He was about to bring upon Jerusalem because of many years of disobedience, worshipping of idols and occult practises.

Thus what God was telling them to do **was for their benefit** – to provide them with a prosperous, safe, harmonious, healthy place to live for the next 70 years.

Prayer along similar lines was put **top of the list** by the Apostle Paul - and the kings and authorities in Paul's day were not much different from Babylon!

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Note that it is **for our benefit** that we have governments that will provide us with favourable living conditions. We only have to look around the world today to realize how urgently we still need to pray in this manner. Of course, as Paul goes on to say, **we should also pray for the salvation** of those in authority. Not only do we want them to be saved along with everyone else, but their salvation will make them more favourably inclined towards believers.

So let's make sure we pray for the wellbeing of our "Babylon", **for in its wellbeing we as God's people will find ours**; and also pray for all those in authority that all believers can lead a quiet and peaceable life.

35. What is Ministry?

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” (Colossians 3:23-24)

There is a great emphasis among many of God’s people on “finding your ministry”. This is fine for those who are called into recognized church related roles, but it can be source of pressure and frustration for those who do not fit into any of the recognized functions in today’s church world.

The scriptures reveal that a much broader range of roles was recognized in the early church. For example, Romans 12:8 includes **giving** and **showing mercy** as ministries! Furthermore, the scriptures **do not limit ministry to church related activities!** Romans 13:1-7 states that the **governing authorities** are God’s ministers, even including **tax and customs officials!**

In fact, many great Bible people had **primarily secular occupations.**

David was a king and a soldier; Moses and Joshua were military leaders and judges; Daniel, Joseph and Mordecai were high level government officials; Solomon was a king and Esther a queen; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job were farmers; Luke was a physician.

Colossians 3:23-24 tells us that whatever our occupation is, we need to **do it as unto the Lord**, and that we will receive the reward of our inheritance **because we serve the Lord Christ.**

Thus we are to see our work, whatever it is, **as service to Christ.** This means focussing on the work itself and not just using it as a vehicle for evangelizing.

The word used for ministry in the New Testament is the ordinary word for service. We need to take a broader view of what service to Christ is and see our daily occupation as ministry, whether we are in the work place, place of study, at home, in church or in community service,. Let’s lift our vision and **see our daily activity in a new light.**

36. Fishers not Hunters

"Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

Jesus called His followers to be fishers of men. However, some of today's plans and strategies for winning people to Christ seem to be **more like hunting than fishing!** Perhaps this is why they are often not as productive as hoped and appear to turn many off.

In John 6:44 Jesus reveals a very important truth: He said that **"no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him"**. This tells us that unless God is drawing someone, they actually **CANNOT** come to Christ, and we are wasting our time trying and perhaps even driving them further away. Then in John 5:19, Jesus said that **"the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do"**. If that applied to Jesus, how much more does it apply to us! No wonder we often find ourselves discouraged in our attempts to evangelize others.

Clearly we need to ask God to show us what **HE IS DOING**, and lead us to people that He is dealing with – a totally different concept from what is taught in many "how to win souls" courses. What can we do then for our family, friends and acquaintances and others? We can do something very important; we can pray for God to work in their lives and draw them to Christ. Our prayers open up channels for God to work in the lives of people who are unable or even unwilling to pray for themselves.

We see this "working together with God" principle in the ministry of Paul the apostle. In Acts 16:6, he and his party were **"forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia"**, and were instead directed through a vision to go to Macedonia. Obviously the timing was not right for Asia, whereas there were people in Macedonia ready to respond to the gospel.

Another important thing to realize is that God Has given us different talents and gifts, and He **USES EACH OF US IN DIFFERENT WAYS**, 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6. In other words, there are **different kinds of fishermen**. Some fishermen may be called to bulk fishing with large nets, while others may spend years fishing in a quiet stream for a wily old trout! When we realize this it sets us free to be ourselves and rejoice in the works of others.

Jesus has called us to follow Him and **HE** will make us fishers. Note that He did not rush around hunting for converts and trying to coerce them into becoming His disciples. Rather He ministered to those who were drawn to Him or people or who crossed His path. He was **never rushed**, and always appeared to have time to share with people. And when He shared, He **NEVER TRIED TO PRESSURE PEOPLE**, but seemingly led them as far along the road to salvation as they were ready and willing to go.

For example, with Nicodemus He answered his questions and revealed truths about the New Birth, but in the case of the rich young ruler He let Him go his way when He saw He was not ready to become a disciple. When He met the woman at the well in Samaria, He sensed that the Holy Spirit was at work in her, and He led her through step by step to receive Him as her Messiah.

Often God's people seem to be caught up in feverish activity, much of which seems to achieve little. Yet Jesus, despite His lack of haste, in about three years did more than could be written down if the world were filled with books, John 21:25. If we do it His way we will find that we have the time to do all that He has called us to do without all the stress! Fishing is a peaceful and satisfying activity, especially when we have a guide **who knows where the fish are biting!**

37. Being Covenant Minded – A Great Need of the Hour

“Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” (Hebrews 12:24)

One of the greatest needs of God’s people today is to be **COVENANT MINDED**. To fully understand our relationship with God we need to see ourselves as being in **covenant relationship with Him**. God has always related to His people by means of covenants. The first covenant was established with Abraham and his descendants. Then through Moses He added the Law and it became known as the Old Covenant. Finally, through Jesus, He introduced the **NEW COVENANT**.

Why did God establish covenants? Are not His Word and His love for us enough? Apparently not; otherwise He would not have bothered with covenants. He never does anything without good reason! The fact is He knew it would be **needed**. A covenant is the strongest form of commitment and by this means God **OBLIGATES** Himself to stick by His people no matter what, even when we are faithless and undeserving. For example, when the Israelites were oppressed in Egypt he invoked His covenant with Abraham to justify intervening on their behalf:

“So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.” Exodus 2:24

So today, because of the New Covenant, as well as His great love for us, He is always ready to help us, even when we least deserve it:

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful.” (2 Timothy 2:1)

The New Covenant was announced by the prophet Jeremiah:

“I will make a new covenant....” (Jeremiah 31: 31)

Why a new covenant? Because a **BETTER** one was needed. Israel couldn’t keep the Old Covenant, which was based on keeping God’s written commandments and obeying His law. So God instituted a new covenant in which His law is written on our heart and mind, Jeremiah 31:33.

Why did he not do this from the beginning? The reason is all too clear when we consider the price that had to be paid. Covenants involve sacrifice and the shedding of blood, and the New Covenant required the ultimate sacrifice, the suffering and death of God’s only Son. This had to be the last resort, when there was no other way.

Being Covenant Minded – A Great Need of the Hour (Continued)

Now the Old Covenant contained wonderful promises covering every part of life on earth – health and healing, protection and security, fruitful and happy family life, the ability to have and enjoy children, prosperous household affairs and business, safe travel, financial prosperity, and victory over enemies etc etc etc. The promised benefits are listed in numerous scriptures, for example Deuteronomy 6, 7, 8 and 28.

So for the New Covenant to be **BETTER**, it clearly **MUST also include all these benefits and more**. If this were not true, then either Jews would have to lose these benefits on becoming followers of Jesus, or else they would have a better covenant than Gentile Christians – clearly nonsense. In fact, 2 Corinthians 1:20 makes it very clear that **ALL** the promises of God are available to all Christians, which must include the promises in the Old Testament which was the only Bible available at the time.

One key point that makes the New Covenant infinitely superior is that it contains **NO CURSES**:

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.” (Galatians 3:13)

The Old Covenant was based on keeping every aspect of the law, and involved curses for disobedience to any part of it. The New Covenant, however, is to be kept by **FAITH**, and Paul made it clear that Jesus has delivered us from the curse of the law. A misunderstanding of this principle is a major problem among God’s people today. A common example is the reference to tithing in Malachi 3:9. Unlike the Israelites under the Old Covenant, we do not come under the curse if we do not tithe, as there is **no curse in the New Covenant**.

Communion is a **covenant celebration**:

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” (1 Corinthians 11:25)

Every time we drink from the cup Jesus instructed us to remember the New Covenant and that He died on the cross to make it available to us. He showed how vitally important it is to us by commanding us to **KEEP ON** celebrating it. It is unfortunate that the King James Version of the Bible uses the word **“testament”** so often instead of **“covenant”** for the **same Greek word**, as it has tended to hide the true meaning. Thankfully, newer versions of the Bible, such as the NKJV, mostly use “covenant”. Another cause of confusion is the use of **“Old Testament”** and **“New Testament”** for naming the two portions of the Bible. It would have been much clearer and more accurate to call them the **“Old Covenant”** and **“New Covenant”**. Had this been done, we would surely be much more conscious that **we are covenant people**.

Being more **covenant minded** will undoubtedly increase our faith in His Word and His promises, and will crease our confidence and sense of security in our relationship with Him.

All the Promises of God are YES

38. Some Key Covenant Promises

Keep this list handy and use it to build up your faith. Use the promises in your prayers, and proclaim them over your life, your family and others whom the Lord may lay on your heart. Search the Scriptures and add other promises to the list.

“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20)

REMEMBER, it brings God glory when we inherit his promises.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:13-14)

I will bless you and you shall be a blessing. (Genesis 12:2)

Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. (Deuteronomy 28:6)

May the Lord give you increase more and more, you and your children. May you be blessed by the LORD, who made Heaven and Earth. (Psalms 115:14-15)

He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. (Matthew 8:17) And by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. (Exodus 23:25)

With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation. (Psalms 91:16).

No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. (Exodus 23:26)

.....your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalms 103:5)

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians. 4:19)

Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Psalms 37:4)

All the Promises of God are YES**Some Key Covenant Promises** (Continued)

And whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalms 1:3)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians. 8:9)

The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22)

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers. (Deuteronomy 8:18)

You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath. (Deuteronomy 28: 12-13)

But My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace (shalom - wellbeing - health, wholeness, prosperity, peace, safety) be removed, says the LORD, who has mercy on you. (Isaiah 54:10)

All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace (shalom - wellbeing - health, wholeness, prosperity, peace, safety) of your children. (Isaiah 54:13)

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. (Psalms 91:10)

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. (Colossians 1:13)

The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. (Deuteronomy 28:7)

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. (Isaiah 54:17)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. (Proverbs 3:24)